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US seizes Iranian ship, Iran shuns peace talk

A truce between the US and Iran appeared in jeopardy on Monday after the US said it had seized an Iranian cargo ship that tried to run its blockade and Tehran vowed to retaliate, refusing for now to join new peace talks brokered by Islamabad.

ISLAMABAD

Iran insisted it has no plan to attend a new round of negotiations with the United States on Monday, despite Pakistan intensifying diplomatic contacts with both Washington and Tehran over the past 24 hours.

After initial talks ended without a deal in Islamabad earlier this month, both sides have traded accusations of ceasefire violations, including the US seizure of an Iranian cargo ship early Monday.

Iran on Saturday said it had received new proposals from the US but suggested a wide gap remained between the sides. It was unclear whether either side had shifted stances on issues that derailed the last round of negotiations, including Iran's nuclear enrichment program, its regional proxies and the Hormuz.

US President Donald Trump has said American negotiators would head to the Pakistani capital on Monday, but it was not immediately clear whether those plans would now change. "We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL, and I hope they take it," Trump said in a social media post.

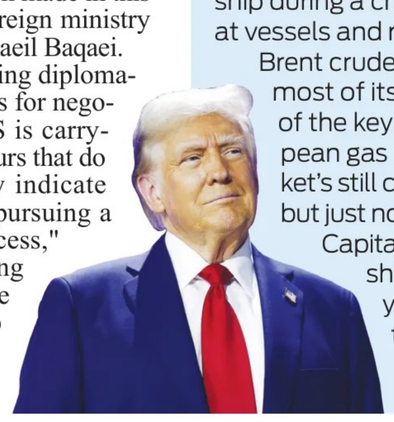
Over the weekend, the US attacked and seized an Iranian-flagged cargo vessel that it said had tried to evade its blockade of Iranian ports.

Iran's joint military command vowed to respond, and its Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi told his Pakistani counterpart that American threats to Iranian ships and ports were "clear signs" of Washington's disingenuousness ahead of the planned talks, Iran state media reported. "We have no plans for the next round of negotiation, and no decision has been made in this regard," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei.

"While claiming diplomacy and readiness for negotiations, the US is carrying out behaviours that do not in any way indicate seriousness in pursuing a diplomatic process," he added, calling the US blockade and cargo ship seizure "clear violations of the ceasefire".

Washington has shown it was "not serious" about pursuing the diplomatic process and Tehran would not change its clearly stated demands as it did not believe in deadlines or ultimatums when safeguarding national interests.

—Esmaeil Baghaei, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman



OIL PRICES JUMP AFTER IRANIAN SHIP SEIZURE IMPERILS TALKS

NEW YORK: Trump on Sunday claimed that American forces seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship TOUSKA after it tried to bypass a naval blockade near the Strait of Hormuz. Iran initially contradicted the claim, saying US forces were forced to retreat. However, the Islamic Republic later confirmed the seizure and warned it would "respond and retaliate". The issue has escalated tensions days before a fragile ceasefire is set to expire on Wednesday. Oil and natural gas prices soared on Monday after the US Navy seized an Iranian ship during a chaotic weekend that saw Tehran firing at vessels and reimposing controls in the Hormuz.

Brent crude jumped as much as 7.9%, erasing most of its declines on April 17 after a reopening of the key waterway was announced, while European gas increased as much as 11%. "The market's still carrying a risk premium into the deadline but just not fully committing to it," said Karobaar Capital chief investment officer Haris Khurshid. "If things just continue as they are, you probably see a gradual push higher to around US$105-US$115, but with a lot of back and forth on headlines."

Israel never talked me into war with Iran: Trump

WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump on Monday said Israel did not persuade him to attack Iran, after news reports that Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu influenced the US President's decision and criticism from right-wing commentators.

"Israel never talked me into the war with Iran, the results of Oct. 7th, added to my lifelong opinion that IRAN CAN NEVER HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON, did," Trump wrote in a Truth Social post.

Trump also said "the results in Iran will be amazing" in the post, which came as the United States prepared to resume negotiations in Pakistan although Iran was undecided. "And if Iran's new leaders (Regime Change!) are smart, Iran can have a great and prosperous future!" Trump wrote.

QUICK HEADLINES

- **'Will not accept':** Hezbollah vows to breach Israel's 'Yellow Line' and rejects disarmament
- 'Iran remains defiant, says 'transferring uranium has never been on the table'
- Kremlin says it hopes US-Iran talks continue for good of Gulf, global economy
- Tehran ready to "take action" after US forces seize Iranian vessel, state news says

Refinery goes up in flames day before inauguration by PM Modi

JAIPUR

A massive fire broke out at the Pachpadra refinery in Rajasthan's Balotra district, a day before its inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The entire area has been evacuated after the fire suddenly erupted on Monday afternoon, spreading a sense of panic in the area.

With PM Modi scheduled to inaugurate the refinery on Tuesday, this incident has raised serious questions regarding the security arrangements and preparations in place.

According to eyewitnesses, plumes of smoke rising from the refinery complex were visible from a considerable distance following the outbreak of the fire. The blaze is reported to have originated in the refinery's CDU (Crude Distillation Unit), triggering alarm among the administration and officials. The intensity of the fire was such that, within moments, an atmosphere of chaos and panic gripped the entire area.

Upon observing the smoke billowing from the refinery premises, the fire safety systems were immediately activated, and efforts to extinguish the blaze were intensified. Teams from both the municipal fire department and the refinery's internal fire brigade worked relentlessly to bring the fire under control.

A large number of fire tenders rushed to the scene immediately, and operations to contain the fire commenced without delay. Reports indicate that security personnel and refinery employees were promptly evacuated to safe locations.

Currently, there are no reports of any casualties. The situation is being constantly monitored, and efforts are underway to bring the fire under control at the earliest. While the exact cause of the fire has not yet been ascertained, the administration and a technical team are currently on-site conducting an investigation.

This incident is considered particularly grave given that the refinery's inauguration ceremony by the Prime Minister is scheduled for tomorrow. Also, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma was scheduled to visit the refinery in the evening.

- PM Modi scheduled to inaugurate the refinery on Tuesday
- This incident has raised serious questions regarding the security arrangements

21 killed, 60 hurt as bus rolls down Udhampur hill

JAMMU

At least 21 people were killed and 60 others injured after a passenger bus rolled down a hill in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur on Monday, officials said.

The accident occurred around 10 am near Kagort village when the bus was negotiating a blind curve. The vehicle was on its way to Udhampur.

The bus crushed an auto-rickshaw before landing upside down on the road below. Officials said those travelling in the auto-rickshaw sustained injuries but survived.

Local residents rushed to the spot and initiated rescue efforts, pulling out the injured from the mangled remains. Police, emergency and Army personnel conducted a joint rescue operation to evacuate victims and clear the site.

PM Modi announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh to the kin of those killed and Rs 50,000 to those injured in the accident.

The rescue operation proved extremely challenging as the vehicle had been reduced to a mangled heap of iron, with its top portion almost completely torn off.

The bus was carrying 50 passengers, mostly those heading to their daily jobs, from Ramnagar to Udhampur.

Officials earlier said 20 injured people have been rescued and shifted to GMC Udhampur. The critically injured are being referred to GMC Jammu. The condition of several of the injured was reported to be serious.

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the loss of lives in the accident. The PM announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh for the families of those killed and Rs 50,000 for those injured in the accident.

J-K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah assured all possible assistance to the families of the deceased and those injured.

They also directed authorities concerned to provide immediate relief and necessary support to those affected.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also expressed deep sorrow over the accident.

In a post on X, an official from the Lieutenant Governor's office said: "The tragic road accident in Udhampur is heartbreaking. My deepest condolences to the bereaved families. May God grant them strength. Praying for the speedy recovery of the injured. I have directed the district administration, police, SDRF and health department to provide every possible assistance to those affected."

Siddu slams Centre, calls for census before delimitation

MYSURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said constituency delimitation should be carried out only after a fresh census, while criticising the Centre over delays in implementing women's reservation and alleging a lack of commitment to social justice.

Speaking to reporters in Mysuru, Siddaramaiah said his government opposed delimitation without updated population data, warning that such a move could disadvantage southern states. He stressed that population control efforts by southern states should not lead to reduced political representation.

Reaffirming his stand on women's reservation, the CM said the Congress has consistently supported the policy. He pointed out that the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and 50% reservation for women in local bodies were introduced by the party. Questioning the delay, he said the women's reservation bill, passed in 2023, should have been implemented immediately.

He also rejected the Prime Minister's criticism of Congress over the reservation issue, alleging that the Centre's approach reflected discrimination rather than a commitment to social justice.

CRYPTO LAUNDERING

ED raids residence of NA Harris' sons

BENGALURU

In a major development, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday conducted search operations on 12 premises across Karnataka, including those linked to Mohammed Haris Nalapad and Omar Farook Nalapad, sons of NA Harris, the sitting MLA from Shantinagar constituency in Bengaluru.

The searches were conducted under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) in connection with a cybercrime and cryptocurrency-related money laundering case involving Srikrishna Ramesh, alias Sriki, and others.

Investigation under PMLA, 2002, revealed that Mohammed Harris Nalapad and Omar Farook Nalapad are close associates of Srikrishna Ramesh alias Sriki and are main beneficiaries of proceeds of crime," sources from the ED's Delhi unit said.

The investigation in this case has been initiated based on multiple FIRs and chargesheets filed by Karnataka police alleging offences such as hacking of national and international websites, stealing of bitcoins, extortion and violation of NDPS Act.

- ED conducts raids at 12 locations across Karnataka
- Mohammed Nalapad's house searched in Ashok Nagar
- Probe linked to alleged financial ties with hacker Srikki

Modus operandi

The investigation has also revealed the following modus operandi by the accused persons: hacking of websites/ wallets to steal VDAs (proceeds of crime); hacking of websites to steal data/money (proceeds of crime); sale of stolen VDAs through Crypto Trading Platforms (routing); the sale proceeds are transferred through bank accounts (layering); and the use of the sale proceeds for personal benefits by Srikrishna and his associates, the sources said.

7.7-magnitude quake jolts Japan

TOKYO

A 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck northeastern and northern Japan on Monday, prompting a tsunami warning, the country's weather agency said.

An 80-cm tsunami was observed at Kuji port in Iwate Prefecture. The quake hit at 4:53 pm, registering an upper 5 on Japan's 7-point seismic intensity scale, and occurred at a depth of 10 km, according to the agency, Kyodo reported. Public broadcaster NHK also confirmed the depth at 10 km.

The US Geological Survey said, "Notable quake, preliminary info: M 7.4 – 100 km ENE of Miyako, Japan." The magnitude was initially estimated at 7.4 before being revised upward.

The Japan Meteorological Agency has warned that quakes of a similar scale could occur over the next week, Kyodo said.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi urged residents in affected areas to move to higher ground.

JR East said it has suspended Tohoku Shinkansen bullet train services between Tokyo and Shin-Aomori. After Monday's undersea quake, recorded at a depth of 10 km, warnings of possible bigger waves were issued to residents in areas nearest the epicentre - in Japan's main island, Honshu, and the northern region of Hokkaido.

NUCLEAR PLANTS UNAFFECTED

No abnormalities were reported at the Higashidori and Onagawa nuclear plants in Aomori and Miyagi prefectures, or at the Fukushima Daiichi and Daini plants in Fukushima Prefecture.

Tsunami siren

Urgent tsunami warnings were issued for the Pacific coasts of Hokkaido, Aomori and Iwate prefectures, with waves of up to 3 metres (approx. 10 feet). Some reports suggest warnings were later downgraded to advisories, though residents were still urged to remain cautious.

SPACE EDUCATION FOR THE MARGINALISED IS A NATIONAL PRIORITY: IIST CHANCELLOR

MYSURU

B. N. Suresh, Padma Bhushan awardee and Chancellor of Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST), stressed that democratizing access to space education, especially for the underprivileged students is not merely an aspiration, but a national priority.

He commended the Government's sustained outreach efforts aimed at enhancing access, equity, and quality in science education, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Inaugurating a three-day residential Space Science Camp (April 18–20), jointly organized by Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology and Arsha Space School at the V-LEAD campus, held in commemoration of a landmark "1550th Birth Anniversary of Aryabhata", here on Sunday, he said IIST, India's premier institution for space science and technology education extends its reach beyond classrooms through its flagship IIST@Schools programme. Designed to ignite scientific curiosity and foster a passion for STEM, the initiative brought together 115 students from government, rural, and tribal schools (Classes VII–IX). The programme blended expert lectures, immersive demonstrations, and interactive engagements led by faculty members and research scholars.

Denny Amrithagiri, the Chair of Arsha Space School highlighted the urgent need to harmonise scientific advancement with human values to ensure global prosperity and lasting peace.

In his presidential address, Dipankar Banerjee, the Vice Chancellor of IIST and the renowned Astrophysicts enthralled the audience with an inspiring exposition on the Sun and India's pioneering solar mission, Aditya-L1.

Drawing from his extensive work in solar physics, he translated complex scientific ideas into relatable insights, making them accessible to young minds. He also stressed that meaningful outreach and community engagement are critical to nurturing a culture of inquiry, innovation, and scientific temper among students.

Providing an overview of the IIST@Schools initiative, Kuruvilla Joseph, the Pro Vice Chancellor of IIST traced its evolution into a nationally impactful programme, enriched over time by the presence of stalwarts of India's space programme. Through compelling anecdotes from the lives of Nobel Laureates and eminent scientists, he illustrated how curiosity, perseverance, and passion can shape extraordinary journeys.

Adding a unique dimension to the programme, Prashanth Balakrishnan. Nair, the designated Astronsit,Gaganyaan Programme interacted virtually with the students, offering

insights into satellites, human spaceflight, and the expanding frontiers of India's space sector. Dr. Lekshmi V Nair, Associate Dean cast the vote of thanks.

Mysuru DDPI D. Udayakumar delivered the felicitation address during the function.

The sessions of the 3 days were handled by faculty members, research scholars, students and alumni (scientist/engineers in various ISRO centres and other research institute) of IIST.

A major highlight of the camp was the immersive module on model rocketry. Students were introduced to fundamental principles through a powerful blend of theory and hands-on experience. They designed and built both solid-fuel and water rockets, transforming abstract concepts into tangible learning.

The experience culminated in live launches of water and solid rockets, along with a static fire test that vividly demonstrated the working and performance of rocket motors. This experiential approach not only deepened technical understanding but also sparked excitement and aspiration towards aerospace engineering.

Spread across three days, the academic sessions offered a rich, multidimensional learning experience. Students journeyed through India's space exploration milestones, explored optics and chemistry through hands-on demonstrations, and connected science with real-world applications. Sessions on Vedic Mathematics introduced them to powerful indigenous techniques for rapid computation, while interactive modules in mechanical engineering brought concepts to life through models and experiments.

A guided Sky Watch session, led by expert astronomers, offered students a breathtaking glimpse into the night sky, transforming curiosity into wonder and learning into inspiration.

DREAMS IN UNIFORM

Youth Throng Mysuru for Agniveer Rally

MYSURU

Mysuru has turned into a vibrant hub of determination and ambition as hundreds of young aspirants gather for the ongoing Agniveer recruitment rally. Candidates from selected districts of Karnataka and Kerala have poured into the city, bringing with them dreams of serving the nation in uniform.

The rally is being held at the Chamundi Vihar Stadium in the city. Several armymen have arrived at the stadium for the transparent selection of the candidates. The recruitment of women will be held on April 27.

From the early hours of the morning, the grounds echoed with the sound of disciplined footsteps, energetic warm-ups, and hopeful conversations. The atmosphere is charged with excitement, nervous anticipation, and an unshakeable sense of purpose.

"I have been preparing for this day for the past one year. Wearing the Army uniform is my biggest dream," said Arun Kumar, a candidate from Mandya.

Similarly, Nithin from Kerala shared, "This is not just a job for me, it's a matter of pride. I want to serve the country and make my family proud."

Many candidates highlighted the rigorous preparation they underwent. "We practiced running every day at 5 am. The competition is tough, but we are ready," said Rahul, another aspirant.

Parents and well-wishers accompanying the candidates added emotional support, cheering them on from the sidelines. The rally not only reflects the spirit of youth but also showcases unity, as participants from different regions come together with a shared goal.

The KSRTC has organised a free pickup and dropping for the candidates from the place of staying to the selection place.

Return to Human Values the Need of the Hour: Anu Prabhakar

MYSURU

A noted Kannada actress Anu Prabhakar said that in the present global scenario, marked by rising war, violence, jealousy and injustice, there is a growing need for society to reconnect with fundamental human values.

Speaking after inaugurating the Basava Jayanti programme organised by the Basava Balagala Union and the All India Veerashaiva Lingayat Mahasabha at Kalamandir in the city on Sunday, emphasising the relevance of Basavanna's teachings, she noted that his principles have the power to guide society towards equality and harmony. If these ideals are practiced in daily life, they can help build a just and balanced society.

Police officer Priyadarshini Sanekoppa, said the vachanas are not merely literary compositions but serve as guiding lights for life. They encourage introspection, especially during stressful situations, and reinforce the importance of hard work and dedication.

Highlighting the role of parents, she stressed that children should be taught vachanas regularly and underlined the significance of traditional practices such as applying vibhuti and performing Shiva puja, adding that vibhuti is believed to help prevent certain skin ailments. The research on the benefits of rudraksha is still ongoing, she added.

On the occasion, actor Amit Mosambayanahalli and artist Nandita Mahesh were felicitated for their contributions. Among those present were Sri Immadi Murugharajendra Swamiji of Mariyala Mutt, Usha Pandit, Nagaveni, and Basava Balaga Federation President M. Chandradhekar.

Free Health Check-up Camp at Hebbal Industrial Area

MYSURU

Emphasizing that the health of society is the true wealth of the nation, a free health check-up camp was meaningfully organized at the Hebbal Industrial Area under the joint aegis of the Hebbal Industrial Estate Manufacturers Association and Samruddhi Trust, in collaboration with Annapoorna Eye Hospital and Newmed Health.

Keeping industrial workers and local residents in mind, the camp offered several basic health services including free eye check-ups, blood pressure tests, lung examinations, and blood tests. A large number of people attended from early morning and benefited from the initiative. More than 250 individuals underwent health screenings during the camp.

Speaking on the occasion, chief guest K.B. Lingaraju, President of the Mysuru Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said health is the real wealth. Regular health check-ups should be an integral part of everyone's life and wanted workers not to neglect their health despite their busy schedules.

The camp was supported by the doctors and staff of Annapoorna Eye Hospital and the Newmed Health team. Among those present were Samruddhi Trust President Sahana Gowda, Newmed Health's Gopal Krishna, Annapoorna Hospital's Uday, Swastik Finserv's Muralidhar, Hebbal Industrial Estate Manufacturers Association President Prakash Gowda, Treasurer Chennakeshava, Secretary Krishna, and several other dignitaries.

Vipra Jagruti holds free mass upanayana in Mysuru

MYSURU

A free mass Upanayana (sacred thread ceremony) was organised by Vipra Jagruti Vedike on Monday at Maharshi Public School in Vishweshwara Nagar, marking the birth anniversary of Adi Shankaracharya. The ritual began at 6:00 am, with the Brahmopadesha ritual conducted at 10:15 am. This was followed by a ceremonial procession of the young initiates (vatus) and the performance of Ashwatha Puja.

Speaking on the occasion, former MUDA Chairman H. V. Rajeev said that the organisation has been conducting free mass Upanayana ceremo-

nies for several years to benefit the Trimata Vipra community. The Vedas represent knowledge, culture and tradition. They are recognised not only in India but across the world. Vedic mantras can present a complete picture of human life.

Later, MLA T. S. Srivatsa attended the event and conveyed his best wishes to the young boys who underwent the ritual.

Scholar Venkatesh Avadhani guided the newly initiated vatus and explained the significance of the Upanayana ceremony.

Among those present were Vipra leaders including Bhavani Shankar, Mysuru District Brahmin Youth Forum General Secretary Vikram Iyengar, Ajay Shastri, Vipra Jagruti Vedike Vice-President Prabha, Secretary Mulluru Suresh, Treasurer Manjunath, Joint Secretary Murugesh, and members Rama, Suma, Ambika, Nandini, Sudha, Prema, Roopa, Sunil, Srikant, Latha, Madhava, Manjunath, Mukunda, Anand, along with parents of the vatus.

FIRE SERVICES FLAG DAY CELEBRATED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MYSURU

MYSURU

Karnataka State Fire and Emergency Services marked its "Flag Day" for the first time with a formal celebration held at the parade ground of the Saraswathipuram Fire Station in the city on Sunday.

Renowned Rheumatologist and Orthopedist, Dr. Madhusudhan T., attended the event as the chief guest. Addressing the gathering, he underscored the importance of maintaining good health among fire service personnel, noting that physical and mental fitness are essential for effectively carrying out their demanding duties. Officers and staff to prioritize regular health check-ups and adopt a balanced lifestyle to ensure sustained service to the department and society.

The event witnessed the presence of several senior officials from the Fire and Emergency Services department. Regional Fire Officer for Mysore Zone, Chandan P., presided. District Fire Officer of Mysuru, Gururaj K.P., District Fire Officer of Hassan, Naveen Kumar K.P., and District Fire Officer of Madikeri, Chandrashekar Bhandari, were among the dignitaries present.

Also in attendance were Ramesh K.C., District Fire Officer at Hebbal Fire Station, Mysuru; G. Laxmikant Yadav,

Fire Station Officer, Hebbal Fire Station; and Harish, Fire Station Officer from Kollegal Fire Station.

The programme highlighted the dedication and service of fire personnel and served as a platform to reinforce the importance of health, discipline, and preparedness in emergency response services.

Emergency Care and Recovery Centre (ECRC) Inaugurated at KR Hospital

MYSURU

Dr. H.C. Mahadevappa, Minister for Social Welfare and Mysuru District In-charge, inaugurated the "Emergency Care and Recovery Centre (ECRC)" established in the Psychiatry Department of Mysuru Medical College and Research Institute, KR Hospital. The centre has been set up in collaboration with the District Health and Family Welfare Department, District Non-Communicable Disease Cell, and Aladamara Foundation.

District Mental Health Programme, Mysuru

The Government of India launched the National Mental Health Programme in 1982 with the objective of providing minimum mental health services to all, especially to the most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of the population. It is estimated that around 6 to 7 percent of the population suffers from mental illnesses. To bridge the treatment gap and ensure early identification and care, training has been provided to all levels of healthcare staff starting from primary health centres.

Under this initiative, the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) has been implemented across all 30 districts of the state. Additionally, the Taluk Mental Health Programme (TMHP) has been introduced in 10 taluks and is currently functioning in 146 taluks across the state.

In Mysuru district, the DMHP team conducts "Manochaithanya" programmes every Tuesday and Friday at all taluk government hospitals, offering treatment and medicines to mental health patients. From April

2025 to March 2026, approximately 47,223 outpatient consultations were conducted across the district. The DMHP team comprises psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, psychiatric social workers, psychiatric nurses, and community nurses. They also identify homeless mentally ill persons wandering on the streets and bring them to the ECRC centre for care. Continuous efforts are being made to maintain mental well-being in the district.

Under the DMHP, to provide humane, rights-based care, support, assessment, and treatment to homeless persons suffering from mental illness, an agreement was signed on January 19, 2026 under the chairmanship of the District Collector with the experienced NGO Aladamara Foundation, Bengaluru. As per this agreement, a 30-bed Emergency Care and Recovery Centre has been established under the supervision and collaboration of the District Health and Family Welfare Department, District Non-Communicable Disease Cell, and the Department of Psychiatry, Mysuru Medical College and Research Institute, KR Hospital.

The ECRC is staffed by a team comprising psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, and ward assistants, and operates under a 36-month agreement. Aladamara Foundation is responsible for identifying and bringing homeless mentally ill persons to the ECRC, where they are provided treatment for a minimum of three months. After recovery, efforts are made to reintegrate them with their families. If family members are not available, they are referred to rehabilitation centres, and continuous lifelong monitoring is ensured.

The Foundation will submit monthly reports to the Deputy Commissioner and District Health and Family Welfare Department, including mental health assessment data, case records, and monitoring details, as per government guidelines. The centre will also facilitate outpatient care services and conduct training programmes.

The Medical Superintendent of KR Hospital will ensure facilities such as blood tests, necessary scans, drinking water, food, electricity, and other basic amenities for patients. If patients have additional health complications, they will be referred to appropriate medical departments for treatment. Overall supervision of the programme will be carried out by the District Health and Family Welfare Department with necessary directions and approvals.

Basavanna's Ideals Must Guide Everyone's Life: CM Siddaramaiah

MYSURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that Basavanna, who raised his voice against the caste system and superstitions as early as the 12th century and worked towards building a new society, must always be remembered.

Speaking at the state-level Basava Jayanti program organized by the district administration here on Monday, the CM said Basavanna rejected the deeply rooted caste system in society, and gave the noble message that all of them must first live as human beings. His teachings should serve as a guiding light in their lives.

Opposing the Chaturvarna system in Vedic religion, the social reformer introduced the 'Sharana culture,' which emphasizes equality among all. The concepts of 'Kayaka' (work) and 'Dasoha' (service) are among his remarkable contributions. He preached that there is no hierarchy in work and that all professions are sacred and equal. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who carried forward Basavanna's ideals, opposed Manusmriti. True freedom is realized only when every individual in the country becomes politically, socially, and religiously empowered.

Siddaramaiah said great leaders like Buddha, Basava, Gandhi, and Ambedkar envisioned an equal society and to realize this dream, people must pursue scientific education, discard superstitions, and become enlightened individuals. Basavanna composed Vachanas in simple Kannada so that even common people could understand them, ensuring that knowledge reached everyone. It is their duty to walk the path shown by him. The portrait of Basavanna must be mandatorily installed in all government offices across the state. He also announced a grant of ₹5 crore for the construction of Basava Bhavan.

Social Welfare Minister and District In-charge Minister Dr. H.C. Mahadevappa said Basava Jayanti celebrations aim to convey the revolutionary ideas of Basavanna, as practiced in Kalyana, to the common people. Such programs should help take Basavanna's thoughts to every household. Basavanna, at the age of eight, stood against his own family over issues of gender discrimination and advocated that everyone should wear the Ishtalinga and preached that the body itself is a temple and work itself is Kailasa. He propagated that tax revenue must be used only for public welfare and had a profound vision for building an equal society.

The minister said in the 12th century, Basavanna opposed the Varna system and encouraged inter-caste marriages. After Buddha, he was one of the greatest personalities who conveyed the idea of an egalitarian society to the masses through Vachanas. The concept of Anubhava Mantapa is an extraordinary platform established for people to freely share their thoughts. Basavanna taught that instead of seeking God in temples, one should worship the Atma Linga within.

MLA G.T. Devegowda stated that Basavanna upheld human dignity and freedom of expression, eradicated caste discrimination, and worked towards building an equal society and establishing a just state.

Kannada and Culture Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi said Basavanna was a great revolutionary who laid the foundation of democracy and championed human equality, and that it is our duty to follow his principles. Basava Jayanti, which was earlier observed on a smaller scale, is now being celebrated as a state-level event with grandeur. It was first held meaningfully at Vidhana Soudha, then at Kudalasangama, and this year it is being celebrated in Mysuru, he said.

Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji of Suttur Mutt praised the united celebration of Basava Jayanti in Mysuru over the past 29 years by various organizations, calling it a model for the entire state.

Siddarama Sharanu Beldala, recipient of the Basava National Award for 2025–26, said that the government's guarantee schemes are designed without caste discrimination to uplift the poor and backward classes, reflecting Basavanna's vision of social justice.

MLAs, MLCs C.N. Manjegowda, Dr. D. Thimmayya, Dr. Yathindra Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar K, MP Sunil Bose, Karnataka Bhovi Corporation President Ramappa, Deputy Commissioner Lakshmikanth Reddy, Additional Deputy Commissioner Dr. Shivaraju P, Director of Kannada and Culture Department Manjunath Swamy, and other dignitaries were present.

During the event, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah laid the foundation stone at Kalamandira for a statue of Basavanna planned to be installed in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office.

He also presented the Basava National Award for 2025–26 to Siddarama Sharanu Beldala.

Prior to attending the stage program at Kalamandira as part of Basava Jayanti, the Chief Minister offered floral tributes to the statue of Sri Basaveshwara at Gun House Circle.

DON'T LIMIT BASAVANNA TO SPEECHES: EX-MAYOR SANDESH SWAMY

MYSURU

BJP leader and former Mayor Sandesh Swamy said the philosophical messages of Basavanna, the architect of an egalitarian society, should not be confined merely to speeches.

Speaking after offering floral tributes to the statue of Basavanna near the Palace on Monday, as part of Basava Jayanti celebrations organized by the BJP unit of Narasimharaja constituency, he said that Jagajyoti Basaveshwara was a visionary who strove for the creation of an equal society. He preached the idea of inclusiveness, saying "Do not differentiate as 'who is he, who is he,' but instead say 'he is ours, he is ours.'"

Sandesh opined that that celebrating the birth anniversary of such a great personality and delivering speeches alone is not sufficient. As politicians, they must first imbibe Basavanna's ideals in their own lives and then work towards spreading his philosophy and principles in society.

On the occasion, leaders including Smart Manju, Muralidhar, Ramesh, Karthik, Lohith, Krishnamurthy and others were present.

Service activity marks Basava Jayanti celebration

MYSURU

Basava Jayanti was meaningfully celebrated by the S. Prakash Priyadarshan Friends Group through a service activity, during which dry fruits and fresh fruits were distributed to the students of Sri Pejawar Public Students' Hostel located in J.P. Nagar in the city.

Speaking on the occasion, Rajasekhar Murthy, President of the Unaided Schools Teachers' Association, said that Jagajyoti Basaveshwara, who proclaimed that a religion without compassion is no religion; compassion is the root of all religion, transformed Vachana literature into a social movement. He fought against social inequality, the caste system, exploitation, and superstitions, and worked to correct the flaws in society. He appreciated the efforts of the Friends Group for celebrating Basava Jayanti through such a meaningful service activity.

Later, JD(S) leader Prakash Priyadarshan said that Basavanna was a great thinker of Indian culture, a social reformer, a spiritual leader who preached equality, and a great leader of the Sharana movement. Celebrating Basavanna's Jayanti means respectfully remembering him, adopting his ideals and principles in life, and passing on his message to the younger generation, which is the foremost duty of all.

On this occasion, Unaided Schools Teachers' Association President P.S. Rajasekhar Murthy, Newspaper Distributors Welfare Association President Homadev, Devendra Pariharia, Founder of Blood on Call Club, Mysuru, social worker Vidya, Ashwini, Rajesh Kumar, Mahesh, and Dattanilaya wardens Puttanna Satish, along with others, were present.

Tread the path shown by Basavanna: Ex-minister Mahesh

MYSURU

Describing the 12th century social reformer, Basavanna is a great leader, former minister Sa.Ra. Mahesh called upon the people to tread the path shown by the great thinker.

Speaking after offering floral tributes to the statue of Basaveshwara at Gun House Circle in the city on Monday on the occasion of Basaveshwara Jayanti, he said Basavanna brought about a social revolution based on the principle of building a secular society and fought for the development of an egalitarian society. Basavanna's contributions—through the concept of Anubhava Mantapa to ensure freedom, rights, opportunities, and justice for all, and through his Vachanas to Kannada literature—are immense.

Mahesh added that the youth must understand and move forward on the path shown by Basavanna, and that his life message remains an ideal for society. The light kindled by Basavanna in the 12th century to eradicate the caste system and untouchability continues to be relevant and necessary even today.

On the occasion, former Deputy Mayor Shailendra, Amit Vishwanath, Basava Jayanti Campaign Committee President Jeevadhara Girish, former City Corporation members K.V. Sridhar and Jagadish, KR Bank President Basappa Basavaraj, JD(S) leader Amma Santosh, Vikram Iyengar, Ajay Shastri, Doora Rajanna, Lohith, Apoorva Suresh, Radhakrishna, and others were present.

Basava Jayanti: Badam milk distributed

MYSURU

Under the aegis of Krishna Raja Youth Group, Basaveshwara Jayanti was observed at Gun House Circle in the city. Floral tributes were offered to the statue of Basaveshwara, and considering the rising heat, cold badam milk was distributed to the public under the leadership of KR Bank President Basavaraj Basappa.

On this occasion, former Mayor Sandesh Swamy, former City Corporation members K.V. Mallesh, K.V. Sridhar, Jagadish, Manchegowdan Koppal Ravi, Guddappa Shivanna, KR Bank President Basavaraj Basappa, Jeevadhara Girish, Doora Rajanna, Smart Manju, Ganesh Murthy, and others were present.

A GRAND TRIBUTE IN COLORS

"Namma Rayaru" Rangoli Sets the Spirit of Akshaya Tritiya Aglow

MYSURU

With divine blessings and vibrant devotion, a magnificent artistic celebration has come to life this Akshaya Tritiya.

Under the spiritual guidance of Sri Subhudendra Teertha, the dedicated members of the Puneeth Kalavidara Team, Mysuru have embarked on an extraordinary journey—crafting a breathtaking rangoli masterpiece titled "Namma Rayaru" (Our Rayaru) in an ambitious attempt to set a world record.

Spanning an astonishing 45,000 square feet, this grand creation is not just a visual spectacle but a symbol of faith, unity, and artistic brilliance. The artwork has been brought to life using an impressive 5,280 kilograms of rangoli powder, blending vivid hues into a mesmerizing tribute that captures the essence of devotion.

At the heart of this masterpiece are five passionate artists—Puneeth Kalavida, Lakshmi C, Kumaraswamy K B, Harshith R, and Preethi—whose creativity and dedication have transformed the ground into a canvas of spiritual expression. Supporting their vision were committed assistants Mahantesh S H, Raju, and Kiran, whose efforts ensured the flawless execution of this massive endeavor.

This monumental work has also been made possible through the generous support of devoted followers of Rayaru, along with Venkatachala, owner of V2 Properties, and Abhi from Mysuru, whose contributions added strength to this artistic mission.

Radiating color, culture, and devotion, "Namma Rayaru" stands as a testament to what passion and collective effort can achieve—turning tradition into a record-breaking celebration of faith.

Grand Basava Jayanti Procession Draws Thousands in Mysuru

MYSURU

A grand and colourful procession marked the birth anniversary of 12th-century social reformer and cultural icon Basavanna in the city, drawing thousands of participants and spectators on Sunday.

The procession was formally flagged off in front of the administrative office of JSS Mahavidyapeeth near Gun House by Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti and Sri Shivaratri Deshikendra Swamiji of the Suttur Mutt.

Organised jointly by various Basava Balagas along with various Veerashaiva-Lingayat organisations, the event aimed to propagate the philosophy and teachings of Vishwaguru Basavanna. The procession featured vibrant cultural elements, including art troupes, Garudi Gombe (giant dolls), Bhajana Mela, and thematic tableaux depicting Basavanna's ideals. Floats showcasing concepts like "Anubhav Mantapa" and the slogan "Kayakave Kailasa" captivated the audience.

Around a dozen youths, including participants from rural areas, drew special attention by dressing up as Basaveshwara and riding horses as part of the procession. They were honoured with floral tributes during the event.

The procession commenced at Gun House and passed through key city routes including the City Corporation Circle, Devaraj Urs Road, JLB Road and Hunsur Road before culminating at the premises of Kalamandira.

Speaking on the occasion, Basavaraj Horatti highlighted that Basavanna had envisioned an ideal society as early as the 12th century and noted that the establishment of Anubhav Mantapa reflected Basavanna's progressive outlook and stressed that his teachings should not merely be studied but practiced in everyday life.

Several seers and dignitaries were present, including Sri Sambasadashiva Swamiji of Madahalli Ukkikanthe Matha, Sri Chidananda Swamiji of Hosamatha, Sri Nataraja Swamiji of Gavadagere Gurulinga Jangamadevara Matha and Sri Gurushantha Swamiji of Kuderu Matha. Elected representatives, former legislators, officials, community leaders, and members of Basava Balaga also participated in the celebrations.

Box: Heritage Floats, Folk Arts Add Colour

A major highlight of this year's procession was the display of heritage-themed floats showcasing Mysuru's cultural richness. Nearly 25 decorated horses, specially brought for the occasion, added grandeur to the event. Tableaux representing poets from the 12th and 16th centuries were also part of the procession.

Traditional folk performances such as Veeragase, Pata Kunita, Kansale, Dollu Kunita, Goravara Kunita, Chilipili Gombe and Beesu Kamsale enthralled the large gathering, making the celebration a vibrant tribute to Basavanna's enduring legacy.

QUICK READ

BJP slams Cong, calls corruption its 'real guarantee'

BENGALURU

The Bharatiya Janata Party on Monday criticised the Congress following Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids, alleging that corruption is the party's "real guarantee." In a post on X, the BJP linked the raids to the Bitcoin scam and accused Congress leaders, including MLA N.A. Harris, of involvement in illegal money laundering. The party claimed the raids had exposed the "corrupt face" of the government. Targeting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, the BJP questioned his silence on the issue and demanded accountability over the alleged scam.

Shankara Seva Awards to be presented at city event today

BENGALURU

The Mahalakshmipuram Brahmin Maha Sabha will present the Shankara Seva Awards to five scholars on April 21 as part of Shankara Jayanti and Philosophers' Day celebrations. Maha Sabha president B.S. Raghavendra Bhat said the awardees include Umakanta Bhat, Mahabaleshwar Bhat, Ramachandra Bhat Kotemane, Chandrakantha Agni Hotri, and Ganapathibhat Tirupati. The ceremony will be held at 5 pm at the Sri Prasanna Veeranjaneyaswamy Temple in Mahalaxmi Layout. High Court Justice Veda Vyasachary Sreeshananda, MLA K. Gopalaiah, and Additional Advocate General Malhari Rao will attend as guests, according to a statement.

Elderly man alleges assault attempt over land dispute

BENGALURU

A 70-year-old man has alleged an attempted assault and life threat over a land dispute under the Yelahanka Police Station limits. An NCR has been registered based on a complaint by Adugodi resident Abdul Sattar. He has also approached City Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh, alleging inadequate investigation. Sattar claimed his family owns seven guntas of land since 1993 and depends on rental income from shops built there. He alleged that over 25.

EU-India trade pact seen boosting aviation ties and industry growth

Proposed EU-India trade pact seen boosting aviation cooperation and sector growth

BENGALURU

With India's aviation sector expanding rapidly, experts say the proposed EU-India Free Trade Agreement could unlock deeper cooperation, especially in maintenance, technology, and manufacturing.

Annett Baessler, Deputy Consul General at the German Consulate General, highlighted that the proposed EU–India Free Trade Agreement could significantly accelerate collaboration in the aviation sector. Speaking at the 9th International Conference on the Future of Aviation and Aerospace 2026, hosted by Indian Institute of Management Bangalore in partnership with TBS Education, France, she pointed to opportunities in maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), workforce development, and deeper sectoral integration.

Baessler noted that Europe's highly integrated aviation ecosystem gives its companies a competitive global edge, while India—currently the fifth-largest aviation market—is poised to become the third-largest within a decade. She added that India is fast emerging as a hub for aircraft manufacturing and design. European firms are already playing a key role, with Airbus alone holding around 1,250 aircraft orders from Indian carriers. India's MRO sector, she said, is projected to grow to $9.5 billion in the coming years.

Conference chair Prof. S. Raghunath stressed that India's strength lies in lifecycle management and MRO services. "While aircraft sales generate revenue, greater value lies in maintaining them. India has the IT backbone, engineering talent, and workforce to lead in this space," he said.During a panel discussion, Sunil Bhaskaran of Air India Aviation Academy noted that air travel penetration in India remains at just a fraction of its population, indicating vast growth potential.

Meanwhile, Kota Harinarayana, former Programme Director of the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft, highlighted India's progress in defence aviation, stating that indigenous production capabilities have strengthened significantly. However, he emphasised that civil aviation requires similar focus to fully realise its potential.

ED Raids Draw Political Fire, Kharge Calls Agencies 'BJP Tools'

BENGALURU

Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday accused central agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED), Income Tax Department and CBI of acting as "political tools" of the BJP, amid ongoing raids in the state.

Reacting to ED searches linked to cybercrime accused Srikrishna Ramesh alias Sriki, Kharge questioned the timing and purpose of the action. He said the reasons for the raids remain unclear and urged the agency to file a chargesheet to establish facts.

The ED conducted searches across 12 locations in Karnataka under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, targeting alleged associates.

Drainage works launched to prevent rainwater damage

BENGALURU

MLA S. T. Somashekar said that a new drainage system is being taken up by the Bangalore Development Authority in Banashankari 6th Phase to prevent rainwater from flowing over roads and causing damage.

He was speaking after launching the project at Dasegowda Palya on the 100-foot road in Talaghattapura ward of the Yeshwantpur Assembly constituency. He noted that the absence of a proper drainage system had led to rainwater accumulation on roads, resulting in potholes, accidents, and daily inconvenience for residents. Children, women, and senior citizens were among those most affected.Following requests from local residents and leaders, officials conducted a joint inspection and consultation. It was found that poor drainage infrastructure was the primary reason for water stagnation in the area. To provide a permanent solution, the BDA has initiated construction of a new drainage network using its funds.The MLA added that road asphalting works would also be taken up once the drainage project is completed, ensuring smoother and safer commuting for motorists.

Former BBMP member Arya Srinivas urged the MLA to also take up widening of the forest road near Lakshmi Temple to 60 feet, stating that it has remained neglected for years.

Local leaders and officials, including BDA Executive Engineer Ashok, participated in the programme.

COURT ORDERS BIND NATIONWIDE, SAYS HIGH COURT IN KEY RULING

BENGALURU

In a significant observation reinforcing judicial authority, the Karnataka High Court has ruled that orders passed by constitutional courts, including the Supreme Court and High Courts, are binding on all executive and statutory authorities, even beyond the territorial jurisdiction of the issuing court.

The ruling came while directing the State Department of Stamps and Registration, along with sub-registrars in Bengaluru, to implement orders issued earlier by the Bombay High Court in a financial dispute involving Electrex (India) and Kotak Mahindra Bank.

The case pertains to a loan of Rs 896.4 crore extended by the bank to Electrex (India). Following a default, the bank initiated proceedings under the SARFAESI Act and took symbolic possession of secured assets. During insolvency proceedings, the Bombay High Court declared the company's managing director Anant V. Hegde and associate D.V. Sathe insolvent.

Despite this, the bank alleged that Hegde executed sale deeds and agreements involving mortgaged properties in Bengaluru, including a factory in Yeshwanthpur, in favour of third parties. The Bombay High Court had directed sub-registrars in Vijayanagar, Rajajinagar, and Nagarbhavi to declare such transactions null and void and refrain from registering further dealings.

However, due to inaction by local authorities, the bank approached the Karnataka High Court.

Justice Sachin Shankar Magadum noted that the Bombay High Court's directions were unequivocally binding and must be implemented without delay.

The Court emphasised that Article 226(2) of the Constitution ensures enforceability of judicial orders across territorial boundaries, making them effective nationwide. It further stated that failure to act on such orders warrants judicial intervention.

Expressing displeasure over the delay, the Court imposed a cost of Rs 25,000 on the Department of Stamps and Registration and directed it to consider the bank's representation within four weeks.

The ruling underscores the pan-India applicability of constitutional court orders and the obligation of authorities to comply promptly.

SP seeks DGP meeting, alleges harassment by senior IPS officer

BENGALURU

Senior officer seeks urgent audience to reveal misconduct, sparks concern internally

In a development that has stirred concern within the police department, a Superintendent of Police (SP)-rank officer has written to the Director General of Police seeking time to present serious allegations against a senior IPS officer.

The officer, identified as DCRE SP Kashi, has approached M. A. Saleem, requesting an appointment to highlight what he termed as "serious irregularities and harassment" by IPS officer Sudheer Kumar Reddy. In his communication, the SP reportedly said he needs just 30 minutes to expose the full extent of the alleged misconduct.The complaint has brought internal functioning of the department into focus. According to the SP, the IPS officer has been issuing repeated memos to a senior official nearing retirement, allegedly causing mental stress. It is further claimed that officers are being compelled to strictly follow instructions, with disciplinary action threatened in case of non-compliance.The SP has also alleged that Kannada-speaking officers are being specifically targeted and subjected to undue pressure. He stated that several written complaints had already been submitted earlier regarding these issues, but no concrete action had followed.In his letter, SP Kashi stressed that the matter goes beyond routine administrative concerns and warrants the attention of higher authorities.

He has sought a meeting with the DGP within a week to present detailed evidence and explanations regarding the alleged misconduct.The issue has triggered discussion within the police establishment, with many closely watching how the top leadership responds to the allegations and whether an internal inquiry will be initiated.

Bishnoi gang threat call: RTO officer receives death threat

BENGALURU

A Regional Transport Office (RTO) officer from Maharashtra received a death threat in Bengaluru from an unidentified caller claiming links to the Bishnoi gang, prompting a police investigation.

The officer, identified as Prasad Shivdas Nalavade of the Thane RTO, was in the city to attend a road safety programme and a cricket event when he allegedly received the call. According to the complaint, the caller introduced himself as a member of the Bishnoi gang and questioned the officer over strict enforcement of auto-rickshaw permit checks.

The caller reportedly accused Nalavade of harassing auto drivers and acting unfairly, alleging that files related to certain agents were being deliberately withheld.

He warned the officer to "increase security" and claimed that the matter had escalated to higher levels, including Delhi. The threat intensified when the caller allegedly said he was aware of the officer's residence and personal details, and cautioned him against approaching the police.

Despite the intimidation, Nalavade filed a complaint. The case was initially registered at Kashigaon police station in Maharashtra, following which a Zero FIR was filed and transferred to Bengaluru for further investigation. The case has now been registered at Soladevanahalli Police Station. Police have launched a probe to identify the caller and verify the claims made during the threat. Officials are also examining the origin of the call and any possible links to organised criminal networks. The incident has raised concerns over the misuse of notorious gang names to intimidate public officials and influence enforcement actions.

SHIFT FOCUS TO SURFACE RUNOFF, REDUCE GROUNDWATER DEPENDENCE: EXPERT

BENGALURU

Amid recurring water shortages in Bengaluru, a leading hydrogeologist has called for a major shift in the city's water management strategy, urging authorities and citizens to move away from excessive dependence on groundwater and instead harness surface runoff more effectively.

Speaking at the Lifetide Film Festival themed "Water in Motion," hydrogeologist KC Subhash Chandra highlighted the unsustainable nature of groundwater usage in the city.

He warned that decades of over-extraction through borewells have severely depleted underground reserves, making them unreliable for long-term use.

"Forget about groundwater. It isn't a sustainable resource anymore," Chandra said, stressing the urgent need for alternative solutions.

He pointed out that nearly 25 percent of Bengaluru's surface runoff is currently lost to sewage canals, which are already polluted, instead of being conserved or redirected for reuse.

Chandra also drew attention to the deteriorating condition of the city's lakes. "Most lakes are not receiving fresh water, and their storage capacity has reduced due to silt accumulation," he noted, adding that restoring these water bodies is critical to improving overall water security.

As a practical solution, he advocated making rooftop rainwater harvesting mandatory across Bengaluru. Citing rainfall data, he said that a single rooftop has the potential to generate up to 80,000 cubic metres of water annually if properly harvested. "This is a huge, untapped resource that can significantly ease the burden on groundwater," he added.

The festival also showcased seven documentary films highlighting water scarcity issues across India. Among them was "P for Pyaaz, P for Paisa, P for Paani" by Laxminarayan Devda, which explored the fragile hydrogeology of the Narmada Valley and the impact of water-intensive farming practices.

Experts at the event emphasized that sustainable water management will require a combination of policy intervention, public awareness, and community participation.

TECHNOLOGY UPGRADATION FOCUS

AI, education and policy reforms vital for India's ambition

BENGALURU

India's journey towards becoming a $30 trillion economy by 2047 will depend on effectively integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) with education, governance and industry, experts said at a collective intelligence session organised by Bharat1.ai.At the pre-buildathon event titled "How does India leverage AI and its demographic dividend to become an inclusive $30 trillion economy by 2047?", speakers highlighted structural challenges that could determine whether AI-driven growth benefits all sections of society.Srikanth Nadhamuni, co-founder and CEO of Khosla Labs and founding CTO of Unique Identification Authority of India, emphasised the importance of primary education. While noting progress in higher education, he expressed concern over weak foundational literacy and numeracy, particularly in rural government schools. "India's demographic dividend will be meaningless without strong basics," he said.

Former Department of Science and Technology Secretary Ashutosh Sharma called for systemic reforms, suggesting the creation of dedicated science and technology wings in every government department.

He stressed decentralisation and the need to develop India-centric AI solutions.Subhashis Banerjee, co-founder of Bharat1.ai, pointed to a gap between India's talent pool and its ability to translate that into global technological leadership. He underlined the importance of building globally competitive technology firms.

Investor Mohandas Pai highlighted AI's role in improving efficiency and productivity but raised concerns over structural imbalances.

QUICK READ

Medical Emergency Handled Swiftly on IndiGo Flight Bound for Delhi

Devanahalli

A medical emergency aboard an IndiGo flight bound for Delhi was handled promptly and professionally, after a passenger suddenly fell seriously ill just before takeoff from Devanahalli. The swift response of the crew and a doctor on board ensured timely assistance to the passenger. According to reports, the incident occurred on IndiGo flight 6E 840 as it was preparing for departure. Moments before takeoff, a passenger experienced a sudden health complication, causing concern among fellow travelers and the flight crew. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the crew acted immediately and followed standard emergency protocols. A doctor who was present on the flight quickly stepped forward to assist.

Illegal Taxi Operators Attack Security Guard at Bengaluru Airport

Devanahalli

A disturbing incident has come to light at Kempegowda International Airport in Devanahalli, where illegal taxi operators allegedly attacked a security guard and threatened his life. The incident highlights growing concerns over unauthorized taxi activities targeting passengers. According to reports, the problem of illegal side pick-up taxi services has been increasing significantly at Kempegowda International Airport, especially during nighttime hours. Authorities have observed that many foreign flights arrive late at night, making passengers vulnerable to exploitation by unauthorized taxi drivers.

Sharath Bachegowda Launches Road Development Works

Sulibele

Development initiatives gained momentum in Sulibele, Hoskote, as MLA Sharath Bachegowda performed Bhoomi Puja for multiple infrastructure projects across several villages. The projects aim to improve road connectivity and overall living conditions in the region. The foundation stone laying ceremony was conducted for a series of concrete road development works with a total estimated cost of ₹2.25 crore. These projects are spread across various villages within the hobli, reflecting a focused effort to strengthen rural infrastructure. According to officials, ₹25 lakh has been allocated for road construction in Cheemasandra village.

Basava Jayanti Celebrated with Grandeur in Vijayapura District

Basava Jayanti was celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion in Vijayapura district, with district authorities and the public coming together

VIJAYAPURA

Celebrations were held in Vijayapura on April 20, where district in-charge minister M. B. Patil participated in the program and offered floral tributes to the statue of Basaveshwara. The tribute ceremony took place at Basaveshwara Circle in the city, where a large number of people gathered to honor the legacy of the thinker.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Patil highlighted that Basaveshwara Jayanti is being celebrated in a meaningful and grand manner across the district where the revered leader was born. He said that people from all communities have come together to mark the occasion, reflecting the inclusive philosophy of Basaveshwara. He also mentioned that a Basava Jyoti Yatra has been organized as part of the celebrations, symbolizing the spread of Basaveshwara's teachings and ideals.

A grand procession was also held in the city, attracting participation from various cultural groups, community organizations, and devotees. The procession showcased the life and contributions of Basaveshwara, who is remembered for his progressive ideas, emphasis on equality, and efforts to eradicate social discrimination.

The minister emphasized that Basaveshwara's teachings continue to inspire society even today, as they promote universal values such as equality, justice, and compassion. He added that Basaveshwara is regarded as one of the greatest philosophers who provided timeless guidance through his vachanas and social reforms.

Several dignitaries, including district officials, police officials, municipal representatives, and members of different organizations, were present during the celebrations. The event witnessed participation from a wide cross-section of society, making it a significant cultural and spiritual occasion in the district.

The celebrations concluded with a call to follow the ideals of Basaveshwara and work towards building a just and inclusive society.

Leaders and Officials Pay Floral Tribute on Basaveshwara Jayanti

Leaders, officials, and citizens gathered in Koppal to pay floral tributes to Basaveshwara on the occasion of his 893rd birth anniversary, marking the day with reverence and a renewed commitment to his ideals of equality and social justice.

KOPPAL

The Basaveshwara Jayanti celebrations were held on April 20 in Koppal, where a large number of dignitaries assembled at Nijasharana Ambigara Chowdayya Park in Shivashantaveer Nagar. The statue of Basaveshwara was decorated with flowers and garlands as leaders paid homage to the great philosopher and reformer who played a crucial role in shaping progressive social thought in India.

Among those who participated in the ceremony were MLA K. Raghavendra Hitnal, former Member of Parliament Sanganna Karadi, District Collector Dr. Suresh B. Itnal, Superintendent of Police Dr. Ram L. Arasiddi, and Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Varnit Negi. Each of them offered floral tributes and remembered Basaveshwara's enduring contribution to society.

Speaking on the occasion, leaders highlighted the relevance of Basaveshwara's teachings in modern times, especially his emphasis on equality, dignity of labor, and the eradication of social discrimination. They noted that his philosophy continues to guide efforts toward building a just and inclusive society.

Several other officials, including Additional Deputy Commissioner Sidrameshwara, Tahsildar Basavaraj Tannalli, Zilla Panchayat Deputy Secretary T. Krishnamurthy, Taluk Panchayat Executive Officer Dundappa Turadi, and District Information Officer Gavisiddappa Hosamani, were also present. Representatives from the legal community, including District Bar Association President A.V. Kanavi, along with various community leaders and members of Basava organizations, actively took part in the program.

The event witnessed participation from a wide cross-section of society, including government officials, social activists, and members of the public. The gathering reflected a strong sense of unity and respect for Basaveshwara's vision of social harmony.

The celebrations concluded with a collective appeal to follow Basaveshwara's principles in everyday life and to work toward a society based on equality, compassion, and mutual respect.

KEA has announced that the Common Entrance Test (CET) will be conducted on April 23 and 24, with strict dress code guidelines for candidates.

KEA Announces CET on April 23 and 24, Issues Strict Dress Code Guidelines

BENGALURU

According to officials, the CET is a crucial examination conducted for admissions and recruitment purposes across the state. In order to maintain transparency and avoid any unfair practices, the Karnataka Examinations Authority has enforced detailed guidelines regarding attire and prohibited items inside examination centers. Authorities have made it mandatory to follow these rules to prevent malpractice and ensure a fair examination process.

For male candidates, wearing full-sleeve shirts is not allowed. Candidates must wear half-sleeve shirts, preferably simple collarless shirts or T-shirts. They are advised to wear plain trousers with minimal pockets. Traditional attire such as kurta-pajama and clothing like jeans are strictly prohibited. Additionally, clothes must be light in nature, avoiding large buttons, zip pockets, or heavy embroidery. Shoes are not permitted inside the examination hall; instead, candidates must wear slippers or sandals with thin soles. Wearing any kind of metal accessories, including chains, rings, or bracelets, is also banned.

Female candidates are also required to adhere to similar restrictions. They must avoid dresses with heavy embroidery, decorative elements, or large buttons. Full-sleeve outfits and jeans are not permitted, and candidates should opt for half-sleeve clothing. High-heeled footwear and thick-soled shoes are strictly prohibited. Only simple slippers or sandals with thin soles are allowed. Apart from essential ornaments such as mangalsutra and toe rings, no other metal jewelry is permitted.

Candidates are strictly prohibited from carrying electronic devices such as mobile phones, pen drives, earphones, Bluetooth devices, and wristwatches into the examination hall. Items like pencils, paper, erasers, geometry boxes, log tables, and caps are also not allowed. Food items and colored or metallic water bottles are banned, although drinking water will be provided at the center.

Candidates must carry their admit card and a valid government-issued photo identity proof. Officials have warned that failure to follow the dress code and guidelines will result in strict action as per rules.

Blood Donation Camp Marks Basava Jayanti

SAVANUR

On the occasion of Basava Jayanti, a blood donation camp was successfully organized at Sri Basaveshwara Temple in Challal village of Savanur. The initiative saw enthusiastic participation from local residents, especially youth, who came forward to donate blood for a noble cause. The camp was jointly organized by Swami Vivekananda Youth Association, Ayushman Health Center, Gram Panchayat Kurubaramallur, and the District Blood Bank in Haveri. The event reflected the spirit of service and social responsibility inspired by the teachings of Basaveshwara.

17th Convocation of Akkamahadevi Women's University to be Held on April 21

VIJAYAPURA

The 17th convocation ceremony of Akkamahadevi Women's University will be held on April 21 at 11:30 AM in Vijayapura. Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot will preside over, marking a significant academic milestone for thousands of graduating students.The convocation will take place at a specially arranged venue within the university campus in Vijayapura. According to university officials, extensive preparations have been made to ensure the smooth conduct of the event. The ceremony will celebrate the academic achievements of students across multiple disciplines, including undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs.A distinguished academic, Professor Ujjwala Chakradev, will attend as the chief guest and deliver the convocation address. Several dignitaries, including Higher Education Minister Dr. M.C. Sudhakar and Vice Chancellor Prof. Vijaya B. Korishetty, are also expected to be present during the ceremony.During the event, honorary doctorates will be conferred upon three eminent personalities in recognition of their contributions to folk arts, literature, education, entrepreneurship, and social service. The university has also announced that 58 gold medals and 12 cash awards will be presented to meritorious students who have excelled in their respective fields. In total, 13,441 students are eligible to receive degrees at this convocation, including 86 doctoral degree recipients and 1,116 postgraduate students across various streams such as arts, commerce, science, management, and social sciences. Additionally, over 12,000 undergraduate students will be awarded degrees, reflecting the scale and importance of the ceremony.The university has made special arrangements for live coverage of the convocation through its official media platforms, enabling students and faculty from affiliated colleges across the state to participate virtually. Strict guidelines have been issued for attendees, including restrictions on carrying electronic devices such as mobile phones and cameras inside the venue.

BASAVA JAYANTI CELEBRATED WITH DEVOTION AT BASAVESHWARA CIRCLE

MAGADI

The 893rd birth anniversary of Basaveshwara was celebrated with great devotion and grandeur in Magadi, where thousands of devotees gathered to witness the traditional chariot festival at the historic Basaveshwara Temple.

The celebrations were held at the ancient Basaveshwara Temple in Magadi, which is known for its rich history and cultural significance. The Rathotsava, a major highlight of the event, drew large crowds from nearby villages and towns. Devotees participated with deep faith, offering prayers and seeking blessings during the grand procession.

It began with special rituals and prayers conducted by temple authorities and committee members. The idol of Basaveshwara was ceremoniously placed on a decorated chariot, which was then pulled through the streets amidst chants and devotional songs. Devotees expressed their reverence by offering prayers and participating actively in the procession.

The temple, which has a history spanning several centuries, continues to attract devotees from all sections of society, including farmers and rural communities. It is widely believed that worshipping Basaveshwara with devotion brings prosperity and fulfills wishes. Many devotees followed traditional practices, offering symbolic items and performing rituals passed down through generations.

As part of the celebrations, community meals were organized for thousands of attendees, promoting the spirit of sharing and equality. Cultural programs, including folk performances and traditional art forms, added vibrancy to the event. A mythological play based on ancient scriptures was also staged on the previous night, attracting significant attention from the audience.

Local leaders and public representatives participated in the program, offering special prayers and addressing the gathering. They emphasized the importance of Basaveshwara's teachings, particularly his messages on equality, dignity of labor, and social harmony.The program was conducted smoothly with adequate security arrangements in place to ensure the safety of devotees. The annual celebration once again highlighted the deep-rooted traditions and enduring relevance of Basaveshwara's philosophy in modern society.

BASAVA JAYANTI CELEBRATION

Basava Jayanti Celebrated at Koppal Information Department Office

KOPPAL

The 893rd birth anniversary of Basaveshwara was observed with reverence at the Department of Information and Public Relations office in Koppal on April 20. Officials and staff gathered to pay tribute to the great social reformer, recalling his teachings and contributions to building a just and equal society.The celebration was held at the district administrative building in Koppal, where the Department of Information and Public Relations organized a dignified program to mark the occasion. District Information Officer Gavisiddappa Hosamani led the ceremony by offering floral tributes to the portrait of Basaveshwara. The tribute symbolized respect for his ideals and lifelong efforts to uplift marginalized communities and promote social harmony.Basaveshwara, a renowned 12th-century philosopher, reformer, and statesman, played a crucial role in challenging social inequalities and rigid caste systems of his time. Through his teachings and writings, he emphasized equality, compassion, and the dignity of labor. His philosophy encouraged people to lead ethical lives based on truth, devotion, and service to society. Even today, his message continues to inspire generations across India and remains highly relevant in modern times.The event saw active participation from department staff, reflecting unity and shared respect for the reformer's legacy. First Division Assistant Bharath Kumar, staff member Tippayya Naidu N., outsourced staff member Manjunath, and apprenticeship trainee Kiran Kumar were among those present. Their presence added significance to the occasion and demonstrated the department's commitment to preserving cultural heritage.Officials also highlighted the importance of observing such anniversaries to spread awareness about influential historical figures and their contributions.

Summer Camp for Children Inaugurated at Prakash Bhavan

CHAMARAJANAGAR

A summer camp aimed at holistic development of children was inaugurated at Prakash Bhavan in Chamarajanagar by the Brahma Kumaris. The initiative focuses on nurturing positive thinking, personality development, and life skills among young participants.

The camp was organized at Prakash Bhavan under the guidance of the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya, attracting enthusiastic participation from children. The program was formally inaugurated by Rajyogini Brahma Kumari Daneshwari, a motivational trainer, who emphasized the importance of cultivating positive thinking and strong values in children from an early age.

Addressing the gathering, she stated that Rajyoga education and structured summer camps play a vital role in shaping a child's personality. According to her, such camps provide a platform for children to develop essential qualities such as self-confidence, emotional intelligence, empathy, and effective communication skills.

QUICK READ

Muni Thimmakka Elected President of MPCS

Marihalli

In a unanimous decision, Muni Thimmakka has been elected as the President of the Milk Producers' Cooperative Society in Marihalli village of Sidlaghatta, while Muniyappa has been chosen as the Vice President. The elections were conducted smoothly with both candidates being selected unopposed. The election process for the Milk Producers' Cooperative Society in Marihalli village concluded successfully, reflecting unity among the members. Muni Thimmakka's unanimous selection as President highlights the confidence and trust reposed in her leadership by the members of the society. Similarly, Muniyappa was elected as Vice President without any contest, indicating a consensus-driven approach within the cooperative. The cooperative society plays a vital role in supporting local dairy farmers by ensuring fair pricing, organized milk collection, and access to essential resources.

11-Foot Basaveshwara Statue Installed

A grand ceremony marked the installation of an 11-foot statue of Basaveshwara at Town Light Circle in Magadi. The event witnessed large public participation, devotional fervor, and vibrant cultural performances, reflecting deep respect for the revered social reformer.

MAGADI

The statue installation ceremony was held in a spiritually charged atmosphere in Magadi, drawing hundreds of devotees and local residents. The beautifully crafted statue of Basaveshwara was taken out in a grand procession across the town before being installed at the Town Light Circle. The procession began from the Town Light area and passed through key routes including Kempegowda Circle and Rajkumar Road, where people gathered in large numbers to witness the event and offer their respects.

The procession was inaugurated by Sri Basavaraja Swamiji of Jadedevara Math, who led the rituals and gave a spiritual touch to the celebrations. Devotees accompanied the procession with chants and devotional slogans, creating a festive and reverent environment throughout the town.

Folk performances such as Veeragase dance and traditional drum beats added color and energy to the event, captivating onlookers and enhancing the cultural significance of the occasion.

During the ceremony, speakers highlighted the life and teachings of Basaveshwara, describing him as a revolutionary thinker who fought against social discrimination and inequality. They emphasized his message of equality, dignity of labor, and moral living. His vachanas, written in simple language, were praised for making philosophical ideas accessible to the common people.Leaders also pointed out that Basaveshwara's principles are universal and continue to inspire people across communities. They stressed that his teachings are not limited to any one group but serve as guidance for building a just and harmonious society.The event concluded with enthusiastic participation from community members, local leaders, and devotees, making it a memorable celebration of faith, culture, and unity.

Teachings of Buddha, Basaveshwara, and Ambedkar Can Eradicate Untouchability: Dr. Hemanth Bhoothnal

VIJAYAPURA

The remarks were made during a national multilingual poetry conference as part of the 893rd Basava Jayanti celebrations, organized by the district administration and Basava Jayanti Utsav Committee at Kandagal Hanumantharaya Auditorium in Vijayapura. Dr. Bhoothnal, who presided over the event, highlighted the persistent issue of caste discrimination in Indian society.

He pointed out that despite progress, thousands of caste divisions continue to exist, with each group often seeking superiority over another. This mindset, he noted, has led to deep-rooted untouchability practices that still affect social harmony. He stressed that only by embracing the philosophies of Buddha, Basaveshwara, and Ambedkar; centered on equality, compassion, and justice can society overcome such divisions.

The event was inaugurated by senior writer Dr. Shreeshail Nagaral, who reflected on the transformative role of Basaveshwara and the Sharanas in the 12th century. He stated that vachana literature, introduced during that period, served as a powerful medium of social reform and protest against inequality. According to him, the Anubhava Mantapa established under Basaveshwara's leadership was a pioneering platform for open dialogue and progressive thought.

Professor Basavaraj Jalawadi, delivering the keynote address, urged people to adopt Basaveshwara's economic and social principles in the modern era. He emphasized the importance of using one's earnings for the welfare of society, as advocated by the Sharanas.The multilingual poetry session featured poets presenting works in Kannada, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Konkani, Telugu, Urdu, and Lambani, reflecting the inclusive spirit of the gathering.

Several dignitaries, including academicians, cultural leaders, and community representatives, paid floral tribute to Basaveshwara during the event.

The program concluded with a call to uphold values of equality, humanity, and social justice in everyday life.

Eminent speaker and retired education official Dr. Hemanth Bhoothnal emphasized that untouchability can only be eradicated if the teachings of Gautama Buddha, Basaveshwara, and B. R. Ambedkar guide the nation. He was speaking at a Basava Jayanti celebration event in Vijayapura.

Dignitaries Felicitated at Wedding Reception Ceremony

KOPPAL

The wedding reception, organized by the family of Mallang Saab Sultan Saab Makanadar, took place on Monday afternoon at Nirmithi Kendra Layout in Koppal. The program witnessed the several respected religious leaders, scholars, and members of the community, making it a memorable occasion.

Among the dignitaries present were Hazrat Syed Abdul Wahab Madasir Pasha Khadri Saheb Peer, the head of the Khadri Khanqah center at Nirmithi Kendra, and Mufti Maulana Mohammed Nazeer Ahmed Khadri Taskini, the Pesh Imam of the Yusufiya Mosque. Maulana Tahaseen Khadri Naqshbandi Khadri Taskini and social activist M.D. Yusuf Khan also attended the event. Senior journalist Sadiq Ali was also present and was honored during the ceremony.During the program, the distinguished guests were felicitated with traditional honors and appreciated for their contributions to society and the community. The atmosphere was filled with joy and celebration as attendees gathered to mark the special occasion.

The newlywed groom Mehboob Makanadar, along with his brother Syed Noor Pasha Makanadar from Karatagi, participated in the ceremony and received blessings from the dignitaries. Guests extended their heartfelt wishes to the bride and groom for a happy and prosperous married life.

The event also saw the presence of numerous well-wishers, supporters, and community members who joined in the celebrations. The gathering reflected unity, cultural harmony, and the importance of coming together to celebrate significant life events.The ceremony concluded on a festive note, with guests appreciating the arrangements and the warm hospitality extended by the host family.

Basaveshwara's Principles Are Timeless Truths, Says Siddappa Lingadal

GADAG

Highlighting the enduring relevance of Basaveshwara, Siddappa Lingadal stated that his teachings are universal truths that must be practiced in everyday life. He was speaking during a Basava Jayanti celebration organized in Gadag district.

The program was held at a primary health center in Gadag, where Siddappa Lingadal, a senior representative of the state government employees' association, paid floral tribute to Basaveshwara before addressing the gathering. He emphasized that Basaveshwara was not confined to any single community but was a global thinker whose philosophies continue to inspire humanity across generations.In his address, Lingadal underlined the importance of Basaveshwara's key principles such as dignity of labor and sharing wealth for the welfare of society. He noted that these ideals remain highly relevant in the present era and urged people, particularly government employees, to adopt them in both their personal and professional lives. According to him, delivering public service with equality, compassion, and dedication is the true way to honor Basaveshwara's legacy.

He also elaborated on Basaveshwara's life and contributions, describing him as a revolutionary reformer of the 12th century who challenged rigid social structures and worked tirelessly for equality and justice. His establishment of the Anubhava Mantapa was highlighted as one of the earliest platforms for open dialogue, where individuals from diverse backgrounds could freely discuss spiritual and social issues.

Speakers at the event also spoke about Basaveshwara's vachana literature, which conveyed profound philosophical ideas in simple and accessible language. These teachings encouraged ethical living, unity, and social responsibility among people.Officials pointed out that merely celebrating Basava Jayanti is not enough; the true tribute lies in implementing his teachings in daily life. They stressed that practicing values such as honesty, equality, and service can help build a more harmonious society.The program concluded with a renewed pledge by attendees to follow Basaveshwara's ideals and contribute positively to society, making the celebration both meaningful and impactful.

Basava Jayanti Celebrated with Devotion

HUBBALLI

The birth anniversary of Basaveshwara was observed with devotion and respect in Hubballi, where various organizations paid tribute to the great social reformer and philosopher. Floral tributes were offered at his statue, remembering his timeless contributions to society.

The celebration took place at Indira Glass House in Hubballi, where members of Horkeri Master Education Trust, Rani Channamma Environmental Service Committee, and Basava Environmental Protection Committee gathered to honor Basaveshwara.

The program began with the offering of garlands to the statue of Jagajyoti Basaveshwara, followed by respectful homage and remembrance of his teachings.

Participants recalled Basaveshwara's immense contribution to vachana literature and his efforts in bringing together several Sharanas to promote spiritual and social reform. The gathering highlighted his role as a champion of equality, justice, and moral living, whose teachings continue to inspire people even today.

Muslim clerics in Vijayapura criticise Cong over action against leaders

VIJAYAPURA

Muslim religious leaders in Vijayapura, have strongly criticised the Indian National Congress for its disciplinary action against Abdul Jabbar and Naseer Ahmed, alleging a lack of due process.

Muslim clerics accused the party of acting unilaterally. They claimed Jabbar was forced to resign and expelled, while Naseer Ahmed was removed without being given an opportunity to respond. "There was no notice, no chance to explain—just direct action," he said.

They described Naseer Ahmed as a key link between minority communities and the government led by Siddaramaiah, and said his removal, along with Jabbar's resignation, has sent "disturbing signals" to Muslims and other marginalised groups.

The clerics alleged that these decisions reflect indifference toward minority concerns and have triggered widespread dissatisfaction within the community. They also questioned the silence of party president Mallikarjun Kharge, calling the developments "grave injustice."

The group warned that a perception is growing that Congress takes Muslim support for granted. "Historically, our backing has been crucial to the party's success," they noted, adding that the community is prepared to reconsider its political options if such actions continue.

Youth Found Hanging under Suspicious Circumstances at Gadri Hill

CHITRADURGA

A young man was found dead in a suspected hanging case at Gadri Hill in Chitradurga, creating tension among local residents. Police have initiated a detailed investigation to determine the circumstances surrounding the death.According to initial reports, the body of the man was discovered hanging from a tree in a secluded area of Gadri Hill. Passersby who noticed the body immediately alerted local authorities, following which police personnel rushed to the scene and secured the area. The spot was carefully examined, and preliminary evidence was collected as part of the investigation. Officials stated that the identity of the deceased is yet to be officially confirmed.

TEMPLE DEVELOPMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Youth Must Take Responsibility for Temple Devpt: Seer

MAGADI

Spiritual leader Nirmalanandanatha Swamiji called upon the youth to take active responsibility in preserving and developing temples, stating that such efforts are essential for strengthening cultural and spiritual values. He was speaking during a foundation stone laying ceremony in Magadi.

The remarks were made during the foundation laying ceremony of a new temple dedicated to Ranganatha Swamy on Gudda Hill in Magadi. Addressing devotees and community members, the seer emphasized that while people invest significantly in building houses and other structures, equal attention must be given to temples, which serve as centers of spiritual strength and moral guidance.He highlighted that temples are not merely places of worship but also institutions that guide individuals towards righteous living and social harmony. Stressing collective responsibility, he urged devotees and especially young people to actively contribute to temple development and maintenance.The seer noted that the temple's grand tower has already been constructed and attracts thousands of devotees due to its scenic surroundings. He encouraged continued support from the community to further enhance the temple infrastructure and make it a prominent spiritual center. He also assured that guidance and support from the religious institution would be extended for the project. Speaking on the occasion, temple committee members shared details about the ongoing development works, including the construction of the sanctum using stone structures, community halls, and facilities for devotees. They highlighted that contributions from devotees have played a crucial role in building various parts of the temple complex.Special rituals were performed during the ceremony, including traditional and chanting of sacred hymns. Stones for construction.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, GIVEN NAME OR FIRST NAME PRATIBHA and Surname: KULKARNI PRAKASH, a resident of NO 164, 5TH MAIN, 2ND STAGE, 2ND PHASE, WOC ROAD, MAHALAKSHMIPURAM, Bengaluru, 560086, Karnataka, INDIA, have changed my name to GIVEN NAME OR FIRST NAME PRATIBHA PRAKASH SURNAME KULKARNI (NEW Name) vide affidavit dated 20-04-2026, sworn advocate and notary Mohammed Hussain K.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SANGEETHA N D/o NARAYANA, R/o 30, 40th Block, E W S Qurtars, Koramangala,Bangalore South, Bangalore, Karnataka-560047, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as SUSHMITHA N.

NAME CHANGE

I, **MEHAR TAJ SYED MUKTHIYAR W/o TOUSEEF AHMED**, resident of No: 8 /1, 5th Main, 3rd Cross, B M Layout, Venkateshpuram, K G Halli, Arabic College Post, Bangalore – 560046. have changed my name to **TASKIYA FATHIMA**, vide affidavit dated: 20.04.2026, before Notary C SHARADA, Bengaluru.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The General Public is hereby informed that my client Smt. Usha. S. wife of V.C. Srinivas, aged about 62 years, residing at: No. 1, 19th Cross, R.T. Street, Balepet, Chickpet, Bengaluru South, Bengaluru City-560053, is intending to purchase the below mentioned schedule property from its owners viz., Sri. Parashiva Murthy H. Son of R. Honnappa, aged about 80 years, and his wife Smt. Manjula Murthy Wife of Parashiva Murthy H., aged about 70 years, both are residing at: Smruthi, No. 3, 1st 'C' Main, Vijayanagara, II nd stage, Bengaluru City–560040.

If anybody is having any objection, claim, interest, dispute for the above intended sale transaction, he/she/they may contact the undersigned with the documentary proof substantiating his/her/their objections/claim/details of dispute/s within Seven (7) days from the date of this publication, failing which, my client will proceed to complete the sale transaction with the above owners as if there are no third party claims/objections/disputes in respect of the Schedule property and thereafter no claims/objections/disputes will be entertained.

:: SCHEDULE PROPERTY ::

All that part and parcel of the vacant residential site bearing No. W-14, PID No. 152900402002601126, Property No. 801/W/14/747, measuring East to West: 22.86 meters (75 feet), North to South: 21.9456 meters (72 feet), totally measuring 501.68 square meters (5400 square feet), situated at Eagleton-the Golf Village, in various survey numbers of Billakempanahalli Village, Bidadi Hobli, Ramanagara Taluk, Bengaluru South District, (earlier Ramanagara District) and bounded on: East By: Road, West By: Site No. W-23, North By: Site No. W-15, South By: Site No. W-13.

Signed/-
Nagachandra. R., Advocate,
Office address: No. 59/A, Chiranjeevi Nilaya, Jalamangala Road, Hanumantha Nnagara, Ramanagara Town–562159.
Mobile No: 8884900848, 9886827848.

Form No. URC-2

Advertisement giving notice about registration under Part I of Chapter XXI [Pursuant to section 374(b) of the companies Act, 2013 and rule 4(1) of the companies (Authorised to Register) Rules, 2014]

1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application has been made to the Registrar at Bangalore that DABSTER VENTURES LLP an LLP may be registered under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares.
2. The principal objects of the company are as follows:
   1. To carry on the business of real estate activities with own or leased property, including acquisition, purchase, sale, development, redevelopment, construction, alteration, improvement, and dealing in land, plots, buildings, apartments, villas, commercial complexes, industrial estates, and other immovable properties.
   2. To carry on the business of real estate activities on a fee or contract basis, including acting as real estate agents, brokers, intermediaries, consultants, advisors, property managers, and service providers in connection with buying, selling, leasing, licensing, renting, and management of real estate properties.
   3. To carry on the business of management consultancy activities, including providing advisory, consulting, and support services in business strategy, operations, corporate planning, financial management, marketing, human resources, project management, and organizational development.
   4. To undertake all such activities which are incidental, ancillary, or conducive to the attainment of the above objects.
3. A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at Door No 186/2, Tapaswiji Arcade, 4th Floor, BTM 1st Stage, Madivala, Bangalore, Bangalore South, Karnataka, India, 560068.
4. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at Bangalore, within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office.

Dated this 21st day of April 2026

Name(s) of Applicant
1. PRIARANJANI BABU KANNAN
2. BABU KANNAN NARAYANASAMY

MODI-LEE HOLD TALKS TO DEEPEN STRATEGIC TIES

India and South Korea leaders met to expand cooperation in trade, technology, and global strategic matters

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday held bilateral talks with South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung at Hyderabad House in New Delhi during the latter's three-day state visit. The meeting focused on boosting strategic and economic relations between the two countries at a time of global uncertainty.

Both leaders discussed key sectors such as shipbuilding, trade, investments, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, and other emerging technologies. They also reviewed efforts to improve people-to-people exchanges and strengthen overall cooperation. The Ministry of External Affairs stated earlier that the talks aimed to deepen ties and address important global developments.

President Lee arrived in India on Sunday, marking the first visit by a South Korean President in eight years. The visit is expected to give new momentum to enhancing the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Both sides are working towards increasing bilateral trade to USD 50 billion by the year 2030.

During his interaction with the South Korean community in India, President Lee said that economic cooperation between the two nations is still below its full potential and needs further expansion. He expressed confidence that future efforts would transform the relationship significantly.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar welcomed the visiting leader and highlighted his commitment to strengthening India-Korea relations across multiple sectors. Officials believe the visit will open new opportunities and deepen long-term cooperation between the two countries.

Rahul accuses BJP of controlling AIADMK

THOOTHUKUDI

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that leaders controlling the AIADMK are under the influence of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah.

Speaking at a rally in Thoothukudi, he cited Bihar as an example, claiming its former Chief Minister was replaced because he was compromised, allowing the BJP to take control.

Gandhi said the BJP wants a similar situation in Tamil Nadu, where it can control the government and Chief Minister. He asserted that such attempts would not succeed, adding that the people of Tamil Nadu would never allow outside control over their government.

Responding to the claims, BJP leader K. Annamalai said there is strong support for change across the state. He alleged that people are unhappy with the current administration led by the DMK, pointing to concerns over law and order and urban infrastructure.

Rahul Gandhi alleges BJP influence over AIADMK, while BJP leaders claim voters want change in Tamil Nadu elections

Annamalai expressed confidence that the National Democratic Alliance, led by the AIADMK with BJP and PMK as allies, would perform well in the elections. He said voters are looking for decisive leadership and predicted a victory for the alliance.

The Tamil Nadu Assembly elections will be held in a single phase on April 23, with counting scheduled for May 4. The main contest is expected between the DMK-led alliance and the NDA coalition.

'AIADMK surrendered To BJP'

KANNIYAKUMARI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday accused the AIADMK of surrendering to the BJP due to corruption during a rally. Gandhi said the party is acting as a gateway for the BJP in Tamil Nadu. He alleged that the RSS wants to weaken Dravidian ideology. He stressed that every state should govern itself. He also criticised Narendra Modi, claiming efforts to control Tamil Nadu politics. He said the DMK and Congress will protect Tamil culture.

QUICK READ

Omar announces relief for Udhampur accident victims

Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday announced financial relief for victims of the Udhampur road accident that killed 15 people. Families of the deceased will receive ₹2 lakh each, while seriously injured persons will get ₹1 lakh and those with minor injuries ₹25,000. The bus, travelling from Ramnagar to Udhampur, collided with an auto rickshaw. The Chief Minister expressed deep sorrow, offered condolences, and assured all possible support to affected families.

Citizens lead civic change across Indian cities

Patna

A quiet but strong change is taking place in cities like Patna and Pune, where people are no longer just complaining about civic issues but working to solve them. In Patna, youth groups such as Being Helper Foundation are leading cleanliness drives at places like Sanjay Gandhi Jaivik Udyan and Digha Ghat. Volunteers not only clean public spaces but also spread awareness, teach children, and encourage responsible habits, helping build a better civic culture.

Delhi court sends accused to judicial custody

New Delhi

A court at Rouse Avenue Court on Monday sent Amitabh Jhunjhunwala and Amit Bapna to judicial custody till May 2 after interrogation by the Enforcement Directorate. The two were arrested in a bank loan fraud and money laundering case linked to Reliance group firms. Special Judge Hasan Anzar passed the order. The ED opposed bail, saying the accused may flee. Defence lawyers argued for release, stating questioning was complete.

India evacuates over eleven lakh citizens as West Asia conflict nears ceasefire deadline

India evacuates over 11L citizens amid West Asia conflict

NEW DELHI

India has facilitated the return of over 11 lakh passengers from West Asia as tensions continue in the region. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, around 11,30,000 people have travelled back to India since February 28 through regular and special flight operations.

Joint Secretary Aseem Mahajan said flights are operating from countries where airspace remains open, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. Around 110 flights are expected to operate from the UAE to India in a single day. Limited services are also running from Qatar, Bahrain, and Iraq, while alternative routes are being used where airspace remains restricted.

He noted that Indian missions are helping citizens move from Iran through Armenia and Azerbaijan. So far, over 2,400 Indians, including students and fishermen, have left Iran using these routes. Travel from Israel is also being arranged through Jordan and Egypt. Authorities said a special control room has been set up to assist citizens, with round-the-clock helplines active across Indian missions. Assistance is also being extended to Indian seafarers in the region.

Meanwhile, Ajit Doval visited Saudi Arabia and held discussions on regional issues. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India is closely monitoring the situation and remains in touch with countries in the region.

Officials added that ensuring the safety of Indian nationals and protecting India's strategic and economic interests remain top priorities as the situation continues to evolve.

Rajnath confident of BJP majority In Bengal polls

NANOOR

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday expressed confidence that the Bharatiya Janata Party will secure a clear majority in the upcoming West Bengal Assembly elections, adding that even a two-thirds mandate is possible.

Singh criticised the rule of the Trinamool Congress, alleging that the state has faced years of fear, violence, and unrest under its leadership. He noted that the party has been in power for three consecutive terms and said such a long period should have resulted in visible development.

He further claimed that West Bengal's contribution to the country's growth has declined over the years. According to him, the state's share has dropped from around 10 per cent to nearly five per cent during the current government's tenure, while other states have progressed rapidly in a shorter time.

Singh urged voters to support a change in leadership and highlighted the importance of women's participation in politics. He assured that the Women's Reservation Bill would be implemented to provide 33 per cent reservation for women in legislatures.

While he did not give an exact seat prediction, Singh reiterated that the BJP is set for a strong victory. He also accused opposition parties, including the Trinamool Congress and the Indian National Congress, of opposing the Women's Reservation Bill and said women voters would respond to this in the elections.

The West Bengal Assembly elections will be held in two phases, covering all 294 constituencies. The first phase is scheduled for April 23, followed by the second phase on April 29. The counting of votes will take place on May 4.

Fire at Barmer refinery before inauguration raises concerns

JAIPUR

A fire incident at a major refinery site in Barmer triggered panic ahead of inauguration. A fire broke out at the Pachpadra Refinery in Barmer district on Monday, just a day before its scheduled inauguration. The incident reportedly started in the Crude Distillation Unit, where thick smoke was seen, leading to quick activation of fire safety systems. Workers in the affected area were immediately evacuated as a precaution.

Around 20 fire tenders were rushed to the site, and emergency teams worked with staff to control the flames. Officials later confirmed that the fire was brought under control after sustained efforts. According to police sources, the situation was stabilised through coordinated action, and no casualties were reported.

The refinery is located near the inauguration venue, where Bhajanlal Sharma is expected to attend the event. Officials described the incident as minor and said it would not cause major disruption. However, the cause of the fire is still unknown, and an investigation is expected.

The incident also led to political reactions. Opposition leader Tikaram Jully called it serious and raised concerns about preparedness and timing. Despite this, the project remains important for the state.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the refinery, which is being developed by Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited in partnership with the Rajasthan government. The project, with a large investment, is expected to boost energy production and strengthen India's infrastructure.

JD(U) authorises Nitish to pick next leader

PATNA

The Janata Dal (United) on Monday deferred the decision on choosing its new legislative party leader and authorised Nitish Kumar to make the final call after his resignation as Chief Minister.

A key party meeting was held at 1, Anne Marg in Patna, lasting nearly an hour. It ended with a unanimous resolution empowering Nitish Kumar, the party's national president, to decide the successor. JD(U) Chief Spokesperson Neeraj Kumar said members praised Nitish Kumar's leadership and his role in shaping Bihar's image at national and global levels.

During the meeting, Nitish Kumar indicated he would continue his parliamentary duties while staying active in state politics. He plans to travel across Bihar with party leaders to remain connected with grassroots workers and monitor development work.

Dismissing reports of internal differences, Neeraj Kumar said the party remains united and no names were discussed for the leadership role. The proposal to authorise Nitish Kumar was moved by Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Choudhary and was supported by all legislators.

However, the delay in naming a leader has triggered political speculation. Posters supporting Nishant Kumar had appeared earlier, suggesting him as a possible future leader. Party sources clarified that he is not eligible at present as he is not a member of the legislature.

KAMAL RELEASES ANTHEM BACKING DMK ALLIANCE CAMPAIGN

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI

Actor-politician Kamal Haasan launched a powerful campaign song to energise voters ahead of Tamil Nadu polls.

Kamal Haasan, founder of Makkal Needhi Maiam, on Monday released a high-energy campaign anthem supporting the DMK-led alliance. The song highlights Dravidian identity and aims to mobilise voters with strong and emotional messaging.

Sharing the track on social media, Haasan described it as a symbol of victory and urged supporters to spread it widely. The lyrics present an image of strength and unity, calling on people to support the alliance in the upcoming elections. The campaign song is being seen as a major effort to boost enthusiasm among voters.

Haasan arrived in Tiruchirappalli to a warm welcome, underlining his growing role in the alliance. When asked about the message of the song, he simply said, "Our victory." His presence in the region signals active involvement in campaigning.

Though MNM is not contesting the elections independently this time, it has extended full support to the DMK alliance after seat-sharing talks. Haasan said the decision was taken to protect the identity of his party and its symbol.

He also described his support as a responsibility to ensure the continuation of the current government and promote what he called a "Dravidian Model 2.0" for development. His approach combines cultural messaging with political strategy.

Tamil Nadu will vote in a single phase on April 23, with counting scheduled for May 4. The main contest is expected between the DMK-led alliance and the NDA, led by AIADMK with BJP and PMK as allies.

AADHAAR BOOST

100 entities join Aadhaar offline verification

NEW DELHI

In a major step towards digital services, 100 organisations have joined Aadhaar offline verification.

The Unique Identification Authority of India has achieved a key milestone with 100 entities joining as Offline Verification Seeking Entities within three months of the system's launch. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said this progress shows growing trust in secure and paperless identity verification methods.

These entities include central and state government departments, fintech firms, educational bodies, hospitality groups, and background verification agencies. Their participation is expected to make services faster and reduce the need for physical documents and manual checks. This will also lower costs and improve efficiency in service delivery.

The Aadhaar offline system allows users to verify identity through QR codes and digitally signed documents without needing real-time access to the central database. This "show, share, and verify" method gives users better control over their personal data while keeping the process simple and secure.

Officials said the system focuses on privacy by allowing Aadhaar holders to share only the required information. This helps build trust and ensures that verification remains transparent and based on user consent. The approach also supports a distributed system, making it more reliable and scalable.

The initiative is part of India's larger plan to strengthen its digital public infrastructure. It aims to make services more accessible and user-friendly while protecting personal data. With faster processes and less paperwork, Aadhaar holders are expected to benefit from improved service experiences and greater convenience in daily transactions.

Experts believe this step will further boost digital adoption across sectors and support the government's goal of improving ease of living for citizens through secure and efficient technology solutions.

QUICK READ

HC notice over Vijay's affidavit discrepancy

Chennai

The Madras High Court has issued a notice to Vijay, the Election Commission of India, and the Income Tax Department over a plea alleging a ₹100 crore mismatch in his poll affidavit. The petition claims different asset values were declared in two constituencies. Vijay is contesting from Perambur and Tiruchi East for the April 23 elections. The court termed the issue an "irregularity" and sought responses within a week.

TCS case: woman alleges harassment, abuse

Nashik

A woman engineer at Tata Consultancy Services has alleged severe harassment and religious abuse at its Nashik unit. In her complaint, she said five accused harassed and stalked her between June 2025 and March 2026. She claimed one accused made offensive remarks about women and religion, while others allegedly molested her at the workplace. Police have arrested several persons, and a Special Investigation Team is probing the case. TCS stated it follows a zero-tolerance policy and has suspended the employees involved.

Doval's visit strengthens India-Saudi ties amid conflict

India steps up Gulf outreach as Ajit Doval visits Saudi Arabia amid rising West Asia tensions

NEW DELHI

In a key diplomatic move, Ajit Doval visited Saudi Arabia on April 19 to protect India's strategic and economic interests. The visit, directed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, comes at a time when the region is facing instability due to the ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, Doval held high-level meetings with Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister, Foreign Minister, and his security counterpart. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the discussions were "helpful" in exchanging views on regional issues and strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries.

The talks mainly focused on four important areas. These included ensuring stable supply chains despite threats to global trade routes, addressing security concerns in the Strait of Hormuz and the wider Persian Gulf, improving intelligence sharing, and boosting economic cooperation. These steps are seen as vital to maintaining strong India-Saudi relations during

uncertain times.

India has taken a balanced diplomatic approach as tensions in West Asia continue to affect countries like Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. The conflict has disrupted shipping routes and raised humanitarian concerns. However, New Delhi continues to call for restraint, protection of civilians, and peaceful dialogue to prevent further escalation.

With millions of Indian citizens living in the Gulf region and heavy dependence on energy imports, India is closely monitoring the situation. The government has also maintained active communication with key regional players, including Israel, Palestine, and Iran, to safeguard its national interests.

Officials said such diplomatic efforts are crucial to ensure stability, protect trade, and secure the welfare of Indian nationals during this period of global uncertainty.

In-short

- Safeguarding strategic & economic interests
- High-level talks with Saudi ministers
- Focus on stable energy supply chains
- Diplomatic outreach amid regional conflict
- Protection of Indian expatriates

INDIA-KOREA AIM TO DOUBLE TRADE TO $54 BILLION BY 2030

NEW DELHI

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on Monday announced an ambitious target to increase bilateral trade with India to 50 billion dollars by 2030. Speaking alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said current trade stands at around 25 billion dollars and both countries aim to double it in the coming years.

Lee highlighted the steady growth in ties since diplomatic relations began in 1973. He mentioned key milestones such as the CEPA trade agreement in 2010 and the upgrade to a special strategic partner-

Myung calls India a global economic pillar; Goyal pitches Korea enclave, hi-tech collab to accelerate bilateral growth

ship in 2015. He said both countries are now entering a new phase of cooperation.

During the meeting, leaders discussed ways to expand ties in several sectors. India and South Korea signed 15 agreements covering trade, investment, shipbuilding, and artificial intelligence. A new Industrial Cooperation Committee at the ministerial level will be set up to strengthen economic relations.

Lee praised India's rapid development and called it a leader of the Global South. He also appreciated the vision of a developed India by 2047. Both sides discussed global and regional issues, including energy security concerns due to tensions in West Asia.

Key focus areas include cooperation in critical minerals, clean energy, and nuclear energy. The leaders also agreed to upgrade the existing trade agreement to improve business conditions and match new global standards.

Support for small and medium enterprises will also be enhanced through a revised agreement and a new coordination body to help Korean companies enter the Indian market.

Both countries said they will continue working together to achieve stronger economic ties and ensure stable supply chains in the future.

WB needs double-engine govt to ensure better governance: Yogi

PURULIA

Yogi Adityanath on Monday strongly criticised the Trinamool Congress, accusing it of limiting religious activities in West Bengal.

Speaking at a public rally in Purulia, he alleged that followers of Lord Ram are facing difficulties and that Durga Puja celebrations are being restricted. He added that West Bengal, known as the land of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, requires a "double-engine" government to ensure better governance and faster development.

At the same time, Anurag Thakur expressed strong confidence in the prospects of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the upcoming elections. He said that people across the state are looking for change and want relief from issues such as corruption, nepotism, infiltration, and crimes against women, youth, and common citizens.

West Bengal is set to hold Assembly elections in two phases on April 23 and April 29, with the counting of votes scheduled for May 4. The state has a total of 294 Assembly seats, and a party needs at least 148 seats to form the government.

In the previous 2021 Assembly elections, the All India Trinamool Congress secured a strong victory by winning 213 seats. The BJP emerged as the main opposition party with 77 seats, marking a significant rise in its presence in the state.

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal met Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, praising governance and strengthening political ties

Kejriwal meets Stalin, lauds governance model ahead of polls

CHENNAI

Arvind Kejriwal on Monday met M K Stalin and appreciated his government's work in education, healthcare, and women's welfare. In a message shared online, Kejriwal said both leaders share a common vision and have often learned from each other's governance models. He also praised the impact of Tamil Nadu's policies in improving people's lives.

The visit comes as Kejriwal is scheduled to campaign in support of the ruling alliance in the state elections. The Aam Aadmi Party has decided not to contest the elections and is backing the Secular Progressive Alliance led by the Dravida Munnetra Ka-

zhagam.

Meanwhile, Stalin has been actively campaigning across the state. He interacted with residents during a morning outreach in Chennai and also carried out door-to-door campaigns in several areas. Large crowds gathered to greet him during his visits.

On the other side, the opposition alliance led by the Bharatiya Janata Party and AIADMK has intensified its campaign. Senior leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Union Minister Piyush Goyal, are actively participating in rallies.

Amit Shah recently held a roadshow and criticised the ruling government, accusing it of corruption and nepotism. He also expressed confidence in the alliance's chances in the upcoming polls.

The elections, scheduled for April 23, are expected to see a close contest between major alliances. Actor-turned-politician Vijay is also entering the race, which could make the contest more competitive. Vote counting will take place on May 4, officials said.

Govt releases funds for rural jobs, housing, roads

NEW DELHI

The government has released ₹17,744 crore for MGNREGA wages while boosting rural housing and road development schemes across the country.

Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Rural Development, Amit Shukla, said the government is ensuring smooth implementation of the MGNREGA with timely wage payments. He confirmed that ₹17,744 crore has been released through Direct Benefit Transfer for April wages, ensuring workers receive payments without delay.

He added that all statutory benefits under the scheme are being protected, and work generation continues without disruption. The government has increased the rural development budget by 21 percent this year, helping meet de-

mand under both MGNREGA and the upcoming VBSY scheme.

Shukla also highlighted progress in the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana Gramin. The government aims to complete 4.59 crore houses by March 2029. Funds are being released on time through DBT, and construction is being monitored using digital tools like AwaasSoft. States have been asked to set up material banks to ensure easy access to construction materials for beneficiaries.

In addition, road development under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana is progressing steadily. Most works under earlier phases have been approved, while new projects continue to expand connectivity in rural areas. The Union Cabinet has recently increased the budget for PMGSY-III to ₹83,000 crore.

Under PMGSY-IV, around 12,100 kilometres of roads have been sanctioned and are currently in the tendering stage. These projects aim to improve access to remote regions and support economic growth.

Officials said these initiatives will strengthen rural infrastructure, create employment, and improve living standards across villages while ensuring timely payments and efficient project execution nationwide.

Son shoots father dead over money dispute

BHOPAL

A man allegedly killed his father in Barwani district after a heated argument over money demands. In a shocking incident in Barwani, a 32-year-old man, Chandan Badole, allegedly shot dead his father, Jagan Badole, following a dispute over money. Police said the accused had been repeatedly demanding more than ₹2 lakh from his father, who had already given him a similar amount earlier.

According to officials, the incident took place on Monday around 11 a.m. when Jagan was returning home with his wife, Gauri Bai. The accused stopped them on the road, leading to a heated argument. He then allegedly used a country-made pistol and fired at his father from close range, killing him on the spot.

Gauri Bai, who witnessed the incident, immediately alerted the police. The accused fled after the crime, and a search operation is underway to arrest him. Police said Chandan had earlier worked as a welder and had been under financial stress. Investigators also found that he had posted a message on social media claiming his father had enough land but was not giving him money. This post is now part of the investigation.

Officials said Jagan had earlier mortgaged land to give money to his son. Family members revealed that Chandan's behaviour had caused tension at home, and his wife had already left him.

Wayanad housing row deepens as minister defends govt

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A housing project controversy in Wayanad has intensified as Kerala Minister K Rajan defended the government amid criticism.

The dispute over cracks and water leakage in newly built houses in Wayanad gained momentum after reports of defects in three homes. K Rajan said only two houses showed water seepage and that he personally inspected them. He denied claims of hiding structural issues, explaining that markings seen in viral videos were surface indicators, not actual cracks.

Opposition parties and social media users have questioned construction quality and safety, sharing visuals that raised public concern. The minister also reacted to personal criticism, saying he is proud to be called a "daily wage worker." He urged people to avoid online attacks against a resident linked to the issue.

The Kerala government said beneficiaries of 178 houses will be able to move in by early May. Officials are conducting a three-stage inspection process, expected to finish by April 30, to ensure safety.

Rajan accused the Indian National Congress of politicising the matter instead of supporting rehabilitation efforts. The issue has raised wider concerns about quality control in post-disaster housing projects, even as the government works to restore public trust.

Sule seeks action over women safety concerns

MUMBAI

Rising crimes against women in Maharashtra prompt Supriya Sule to seek urgent government action and stronger safety measures.

Supriya Sule, Working President of Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar faction), has written to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis expressing serious concern over increasing crimes against women in the state.

In her letter, Sule highlighted a rise in offences such as physical assault, murder, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, and kidnapping. She pointed out that major cities including Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, and Nashik are witnessing a surge in such incidents, creating fear among citizens.

She added that the problem is not limited to urban areas, as rural regions are also affected. According to her, this situation is impacting girls' education, health, and overall development, with parents increasingly worried about their safety.

Sule said the growing crime rate is damaging Maharashtra's reputation for maintaining law and order. She stressed that ensuring safety is the government's primary responsibility.

To address the issue, she urged the Chief Minister to personally review women's safety across all districts. She called for increasing the number of women police personnel and strengthening night patrols. Sule also demanded activation of Vishakha Committees in every district and filling vacancies in the State Women's Commission.

SURGICAL CHECKLISTS

Kerala issues surgical safety protocol after medical lapses

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Kerala government has rolled out a new surgical safety protocol aimed at reducing increasing medical errors and improving the quality of patient care in hospitals across the state.

The order, issued under the authority of the Governor and approved by IAS officer Rajan Namdev Khobragade, is based on guidelines from the World Health Organisation, along with changes suited to local healthcare needs. The step follows rising concerns over surgical mistakes such as wrong-site operations, objects left inside patients, and poor communication among medical staff.

Under the new rules, all healthcare facilities, from primary health centres to major hospitals, must strictly follow standard safety procedures. These include detailed checks before surgery, use of standard safety checklists, and confirmation after procedures. Medical staff must verify patient identity, ensure proper consent is taken, and clearly mark the surgical area before

starting any operation.

The protocol introduces a three-stage system—Sign-In, Time-Out, and Sign-Out—to improve coordination and reduce errors during surgery. It also highlights the need for proper record-keeping, strict infection control measures, and a ban on mobile phone use inside operation theatres.

To tackle issues like staff fatigue and communication gaps, the government has made it mandatory to conduct regular training sessions, safety audits, and set up Root Cause Analysis teams. Any adverse event must be reported within 24 hours for review.

Officials stated that this initiative is intended to promote a strong culture of safety, ensure accountability, and raise overall healthcare standards across the state.

QUICK READ

Senge Sering blasts Pak over terrorism role

Washington

Ahead of the first anniversary of the Pahalgam terror attack, Senge Sering strongly criticised Pakistan's military and foreign policy. He said terrorism remains deeply rooted in the country's system and called it the "bread and butter" of its establishment. Referring to the April 2025 attack that killed 26 people, including a foreign tourist, he said such acts are used to maintain control and influence. The global community condemned the attack, while India responded through Operation Sindoor, targeting terror camps and sending a strong message against cross-border terrorism.

Quake hits Japan, Tsunami warning issued

Tokyo

A strong 7.5 magnitude earthquake struck northeastern and northern Japan on Monday, prompting a tsunami warning. The quake occurred at a depth of 10 km and recorded high intensity on the seismic scale. An 80-centimeter tsunami was observed at Kuji port in Iwate Prefecture, while authorities warned of waves up to 3 meters along Pacific coastal areas. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi urged residents to move to higher ground. No damage was reported at major nuclear plants. Train services on the Tohoku Shinkansen line were temporarily suspended as a precaution.

Stir over forced disappearances in Baloch

Quetta

Fresh allegations of enforced disappearances have emerged in Balochistan, with two young men reportedly missing in Gwadar and Quetta. According to reports, a 19-year-old fisherman was taken from his home in Jiwani, while another student was detained in Quetta and has not been seen since. Meanwhile, four previously missing persons were released across the province in recent days. Protests by families of missing individuals continue in Quetta, crossing over 6,000 days. Activists have demanded accountability.

US-Israel 'failed on all counts' in conflict

Iran's envoy says Washington would not gain success through talks after failing on the battlefield

MOSCOW

Iran's Ambassador to Russia, Kazem Jalali, has said that recent military actions by the United States and Israel failed to achieve their goals against Iran.

In an interview with Vedomosti, he stated that Washington would not gain success through talks after failing on the battlefield.

Jalali said the initial aim of the attacks was to take control of Iran and bring about regime change within days. However, he questioned the outcome and said none of the objectives were achieved. He described the attacks as a complete failure.

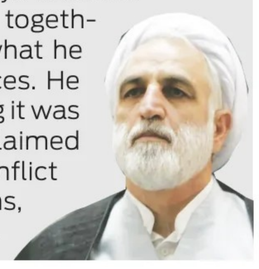
He also noted that US demands changed during the conflict. According to him, the focus shifted from political control to securing access to the Strait of Hormuz. He dismissed the idea of a naval blockade, saying it would not affect Iran's strong determination.The envoy added that the conflict only strengthened Iran's resolve. He pointed out that the US had earlier shown support for Iran's 10-point proposal but later withdrew. Jalali stressed that Iran would not accept unfair agreements after the conflict.

He also said that what the US, under President Donald Trump, failed to achieve during the war could not be achieved through negotiations. He called for talks based on fair and balanced terms.These remarks come as a two-week ceasefire is set to end on April 22.

Earlier talks between Tehran and Washington remained deadlocked over the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's nuclear programme, raising fears of further escalation.

Iran stands firm on demands

Tehran, April 20: Iran's judiciary chief says country remains united and has not backed down from its core demands.Iran's Judiciary Chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei has said that the nation has shown strong unity during recent tensions and has not made any compromise on its key demands. Speaking to ISNA, he stated that people across the country stood together to face external aggression.Ejei said the unity seen during the conflict was rare and possibly unmatched in the country's history. He added that all sections of society came together to defend the nation against what he described as powerful global forces. He also linked this unity to faith, saying it was achieved with divine support. He claimed that those who started the conflict are now seeking negotiations, while Iran continues to stand firm.



2 FC personnel killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa attack

ISLAMABAD

Two Federal Constabulary personnel were shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.According to police, the incident took place in the Kuram Garhi area when the personnel were shopping in a local market on Sunday. The attackers arrived on a motorcycle, opened fire, and escaped from the scene. Both victims were posted in the FC Daryoba MI platoon.

Security forces quickly reached the spot, sealed the area, and launched a search operation to trace the attackers. Additional police personnel were also deployed to maintain security.

Earlier, on April 18, unidentified attackers destroyed a vacant police post in the Shamuzai area using explosives. No casualties were reported in that incident, but authorities began an investigation and collected evidence from the site.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has witnessed a rise in violence in recent months. Several attacks on law enforcement personnel have been reported in districts such as Bannu, Lakki Marwat, and Bajaur.

ISRAELI COURT DELAYS NETANYAHU'S TESTIMONY OVER SECURITY REASONS

TEL AVIV

The Jerusalem District Court has postponed the testimony of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his ongoing corruption trial for the current week.

The decision came after his legal team requested a delay, citing "security and diplomatic" reasons. They confirmed that the court accepted the request and cancelled a hearing scheduled for Tuesday.

A panel of judges agreed to hear another defence witness instead of Netanyahu. However, the State Attorney's Office opposed the delay, arguing that unless there are urgent security concerns, the Prime Minister should follow the court schedule. Prosecutors stressed the need to move the trial forward, as it is in the public interest.

The court will now hear testimony from Ilanit Filber, wife of former aide and key state witness Shlomo Filber. He is a central figure in "Case 4000," also known as the Bezeq-Walla affair, where Netanyahu faces bribery charges.

Prosecutors allege that Netanyahu helped businessman Shaul Elovitch's Bezeq telecom company in return for favourable media coverage on the Walla website. Netanyahu has denied all allegations.

The trial is currently in the cross-examination stage. Netanyahu began testifying in December 2024, and questioning by prosecutors started in June 2025. Earlier hearings focused mainly on Case 4000.

The court schedule was also affected by upcoming national events, including Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut, leading to a shorter working week.

Iran refuses further talks with US

TEHRAN

Iran has announced that it currently has no plans to hold another round of negotiations with the United States, signalling a growing diplomatic deadlock. The statement was made by Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei and reported by source.

Baqaei said that the present situation is not suitable for meaningful dialogue, despite hopes from international mediators for follow-up talks after the recent Islamabad discussions. His remarks reflect increasing tensions as the ceasefire deadline approaches.

Meanwhile, Ebrahim Azizi, head of Iran's Parliament National Security Committee, said that any diplomatic engagement with Washington

depends on Iran's national interest and security. In an interview with Al Jazeera, he stressed that Iran is ready to act in ways that protect its interests.

Azizi described negotiations as a continuation of battlefield efforts, stating that talks would only be useful if they bring results that match military achievements. He warned that discussions would fail if the US makes excessive demands or follows what he called a "bullying approach."

He added that although Iran has not completely closed the door to dialogue, it will not negotiate at any cost. Clear conditions have been set, including respect for Iran's red lines, progress on the issue of Lebanon, and the release of frozen Iranian assets.

The situation remains tense as the ceasefire is set to end on April 22. Earlier talks between Tehran and Washington ended without agreement over key issues such as the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's nuclear programme.

With limited progress and rising distrust, the possibility of further conflict remains high if both sides fail to reach a common ground soon.

Israel condemns damage to Christian symbol in Lebanon

TEL AVIV

Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar has strongly condemned the reported damage to a Christian religious symbol in southern Lebanon, describing the act as both disgraceful and unacceptable. The controversy emerged after a photo circulated widely on social media, allegedly showing an Israeli soldier striking a statue of Jesus Christ.

According to a report, the incident occurred in Debel, a village with a predominantly Christian population. The image indicated that the statue had been removed from the cross and damaged. Local authorities and residents expressed deep concern, saying the act hurt their religious feelings and showed disrespect towards their sacred beliefs.

Sa'ar called the incident "grave and disgraceful," emphasising that such behaviour is completely against Israel's values of respecting all religions and their sacred symbols. He also issued an apology to the Christian community affected by the incident and assured that firm action would be taken against those found responsible. He praised the

The IDF stated that it is taking the matter very seriously and has begun an inquiry through its Northern Command

response of the Israel Defense Forces for condemning the act and promptly launching an investigation.

The IDF stated that it is taking the matter very seriously and has begun an inquiry through its Northern Command. It further clarified that the soldier's actions do not represent the conduct expected from its personnel.

Authorities have also said that efforts are underway to repair and restore the damaged statue to its original condition. Debel, situated in southern Lebanon, is one of several areas currently under Israeli military presence, making the incident more sensitive in the region.

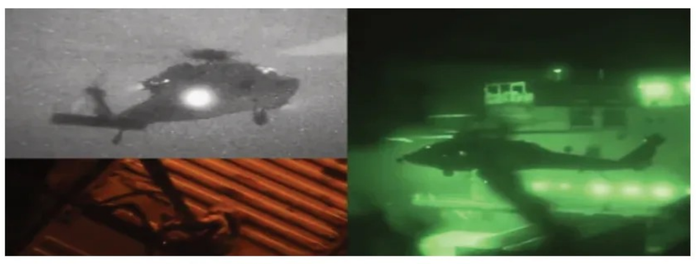
2 FC personnel killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa attack

ISLAMABAD

Two Federal Constabulary personnel were shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The incident took place in the Kuram Garhi area when the personnel were shopping in a local market on Sunday. The attackers arrived on a motorcycle, opened fire, and escaped from the scene. Both victims were posted in the FC Daryoba MI platoon.

Security forces quickly reached the spot, sealed the area, and launched a search operation to trace the attackers. Additional police personnel were also deployed to maintain security.

US marines seize Iranian vessel amid Gulf tensions



FLORIDA

The United States has released footage showing its Marines boarding and seizing an Iranian-flagged vessel in the Gulf of Oman.According to US Central Command, the operation involved Marines launching from the USS Tripoli by helicopter and rappelling onto the container ship Touska. The video showed troops carrying out a fast-rope boarding as part of a planned maritime interception.The US stated that the vessel was attempting to violate a naval blockade while heading towards an Iranian port. Officials said the USS Spruance tracked the ship and issued multiple warnings over six hours. When the vessel did not comply, US forces fired at its engine room to disable it before boarding.

Protests erupt outside Karachi Press Club over medical student's death

KARACHI

Civil society groups, students, political activists, and relatives of Fahmeeda Laghari gathered outside the Karachi Press Club, voicing strong concerns over the handling of the investigation into the reported suicide of the young medical student in the Mirpurkhas area of Karachi.Protesters accused authorities of failing to carry out a transparent, impartial, and thorough inquiry, while also neglecting to apprehend individuals named by the victim's family, as reported by source. According to demonstrators demanded immediate action, including arrests and strict action against the alleged perpetrators, and the establishment of functional anti-harassment committees across educational institutions.Qazi Khizar, vice chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), confirmed that members of HRCP, the Aurat Foundation, and student groups had joined the protest at the request of Laghari's family.Meanwhile, workers of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), including several women, also staged a separate demonstration at the same venue.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	6			7			9	
8		2	1		6	5		7
	1			9			2	
2		1	6		8	7		9
	8			4			1	
5		9	2		3	8		4
	2			8			5	
1		8	5		9	4		2
	5			2			8	

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

6	5	9	3	1	4	2	8	7
1	8	7	6	5	2	4	3	9
2	3	4	8	9	7	5	1	6
4	2	6	1	3	5	9	7	8
8	7	1	9	4	6	3	5	2
5	9	3	2	7	8	6	4	1
3	1	2	5	8	9	7	6	4
7	6	5	4	2	1	8	9	3
9	4	8	7	6	3	1	2	5

HOUSING OUTREACH

'India commitment to welfare of Tamils in SL'

Nuwara Eliya

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan visited Nuwara Eliya during his two-day trip to Sri Lanka and met beneficiaries of the Indian Housing Project.

He interacted with residents at Liddlesdale Estate in Ragala and expressed happiness at meeting members of the Indian-origin Tamil community.

During the visit, he reaffirmed India's strong commitment to the welfare of Tamil people in Sri Lanka. He said that the Government of India has already provided 50,000 houses to Tamil families in the Northern and Eastern provinces, as well as plantation areas. He also announced that another 10,000 houses will be built under the fourth phase of the project.

The Indian Housing Project is one of India's major development initiatives in Sri Lanka, aimed at helping families affected by past conflict and economic hardship. The visit also marked the completion and handover of the final set of houses under Phase III of the project.Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said that Phase III included 4,000 houses for estate workers across Central, Uva, and Southern provinces, with most already delivered. He described the project as one of India's largest grant assistance programmes abroad, with a total value of around Rs 1,835 crore.

During his interaction, the Vice President also expressed concern over the damage caused by Cyclone Ditwa. He spoke about India's quick relief efforts carried out under Operation Sagar Bandhu to support affected communities.

The visit highlighted the strong partnership between India and Sri Lanka, focusing on development, support, and welfare for Tamil communities in the region.

Haaland strikes as Manchester City edge Arsenal in title race thriller

Norwegian ends goal drought to hand City crucial advantage in race

MANCHESTER

Erling Haaland delivered when it mattered most, scoring the decisive goal to guide Manchester City to a 2-1 victory over Arsenal in a high-stakes Premier League clash that could prove pivotal in the title race.

The Norwegian striker ended a league goal drought stretching back to February, producing an emphatic finish in the 65th minute at the Etihad Stadium. His strike secured all three points for City, who now sit just three points behind league leaders Arsenal with a crucial game in hand.

City's victory has significantly shifted the dynamics of the title race. A win over Burnley in their next fixture would see them climb to the top of the table with five matches remaining, putting them firmly in control of their title defence.

Pep Guardiola's side began brightly, capitalising on renewed momentum after Arsenal's unexpected defeat to Bournemouth in their previous outing. Their early dominance paid off in the 15th minute when Rayan Cherki produced a moment of brilliance, weaving through defenders before slotting home to give City the lead.

However, Arsenal responded almost immediately. A moment of hesitation from City goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma allowed Kai Havertz to pounce and level the score, setting up an intense contest between the two title contenders.

The second half saw both teams push for a winner, with Arsenal coming close when Eberechi Eze struck the woodwork. But it was Haaland who ultimately made the difference, finishing off a well-crafted move initiated by Nico O'Reilly to score his 23rd league goal of the season.

For Arsenal, the defeat is a setback in their bid to secure a first league title since 2004, despite leading the standings for much of the campaign. Meanwhile, City's experience in high-pressure situations once again came to the fore.

With the title race entering its decisive phase, Haaland's timely return to scoring form could prove crucial as Manchester City look to overtake Arsenal and retain their crown.

Tottenham report racist abuse of Kevin Danso after Brighton draw

Club vows strong action as defender targeted following late equaliser incident.

LONDON

Tottenham Hotspur have reported incidents of racist abuse directed at defender Kevin Danso to police following their 2-2 draw with Brighton & Hove Albion in the Premier League.

The club strongly condemned what it described as "vile, dehumanising racism" aimed at the Austria international on social media in the aftermath of Saturday's match. Danso was involved in the late sequence that led to Brighton's stoppage-time equaliser, scored by Georginio Rutter, a moment that left Tottenham in the relegation zone.

In an official statement, Tottenham said the abuse began shortly after the fixture and has continued since, calling the behaviour "abhorrent" and clearly criminal. The club confirmed it has formally reported the incidents to the authorities and will work to identify those responsible.

"We have heard and seen vile, dehumanizing racism. Behaviour that is without doubt a criminal offence. It will not be tolerated," the club said, adding that it would pursue the strongest possible action against individuals found guilty.

Tottenham also reiterated their full support for Danso, both as a player and as an individual. "Kevin has our complete and unconditional support… No one at this club will ever stand alone in the face of this," the statement added, underlining a zero-tolerance stance towards discrimination.

The incident came during the league's "No Room for Racism" campaign weekend, amplifying concerns about persistent abuse faced by players despite ongoing awareness efforts. The Premier League also issued a message of solidarity, warning that any individuals identified could face severe consequences, including bans and legal prosecution. The league emphasised its commitment to tackling discrimination across all levels of the game.Racist abuse in football, particularly on social media platforms, remains a pressing issue, with clubs and governing bodies increasingly pushing for stricter enforcement and accountability.

As investigations continue, Tottenham's response signals a firm stand against racism, reinforcing the message that such conduct has no place in sport or society.

HC asks Centre to decide on Padma Vibhushan for Khashaba Jadhav by May 4

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court has directed the Union Government to take a decision by May 4 on conferring the Padma Vibhushan posthumously on Khashaba Dadasaheb Jadhav, India's first individual Olympic medallist.

A division bench comprising Justices Madhav Jamdar and Pravin Patil, hearing the matter at the Kolhapur Bench, noted that Jadhav's status as the country's first individual Olympic medal winner is undisputed. The court passed the order on April 15 while hearing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by the Kusteeveer Khashaba Jadhav Foundation, founded by his son Ranjeet Jadhav.

The petition urged the Centre, specifically the Padma Awards Cell under the Ministry of Home Affairs, to reconsider and decide on their representation seeking the conferment of the Padma Vibhushan — India's second-highest civilian award — on the late wrestler. The court directed the Union Government to make an "appropriate decision" within the stipulated deadline and scheduled the next hearing for May 5.

It also observed that the state government should extend prompt cooperation if any procedural requirements arise during the process. The directive comes after repeated representations by Jadhav's family reportedly went unanswered, prompting the foundation to approach the court.

Champions extend dominance with commanding performance to secure title early again

BAYERN SEAL BUNDESLIGA CROWN WITH DOMINANT WIN OVER STUTTGART

MUNICH

Bayern Munich clinched yet another Bundesliga title with a commanding 4-2 victory over VfB Stuttgart, extending their remarkable dominance in German football.

The win took Bayern 15 points clear of second-placed Borussia Dortmund with just four matches remaining, making their lead mathematically unassailable.

It marks the club's record-extending 35th German championship and reinforces their long-standing supremacy in the league.

Despite the eventual scoreline, Bayern were briefly unsettled when Stuttgart's Chris Führich opened the scoring in the 21st minute, catching the hosts off guard.

However, the response from Bayern was swift and emphatic. Raphaël Guerreiro equalised soon after, sparking a burst of attacking brilliance. Within a six-minute spell, Nicolas Jackson and Alphonso Davies added to the tally, turning the game decisively in Bayern's favour before half-time. The rapid succession of goals exposed Stuttgart's defensive frailties and effectively put the contest beyond doubt.

England striker Harry Kane, introduced in the second half, added further gloss to the victory by scoring his 32nd league goal of the season. His consistent goal-scoring form has been a cornerstone of Bayern's successful campaign.

Stuttgart managed a late consolation through a spectacular strike by Chema in the 88th minute, but it did little to alter the outcome or dampen celebrations among the home fans.

Bayern could have scored even more, having created numerous chances against an overwhelmed Stuttgart defence. Their clinical finishing and relentless attacking approach once again underlined the gap between them and their domestic rivals.

This latest triumph continues Bayern's extraordinary run of success in the Bundesliga era, with all but one of their titles coming since the league's formation in 1963.

As celebrations begin in Munich, attention will now turn to finishing the season strongly and preparing for future challenges, but yet another title reinforces Bayern Munich's status as the undisputed powerhouse of German football.

India flagged 'high risk' for doping; athletics body moved to top scrutiny tier

NEW DELHI

India's track and field ecosystem has come under sharp global scrutiny after the Athletics Integrity Unit classified the country as having an "extremely high" risk of doping, downgrading the Athletics Federation of India to Category A under World Athletics anti-doping rules. The reclassification places India among the highest-risk nations, triggering stricter compliance requirements for athletes and administrators.

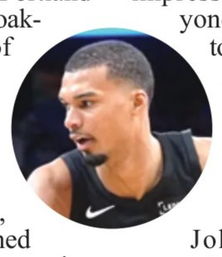
Category A federations face enhanced monitoring, including increased in-competition and out-of-competition testing, as well as mandatory adherence to the Athlete Biological Passport programme.

The decision follows a worrying trend in Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs). India recorded 48 violations in 2022, rising to 63 in 2023 and peaking at 71 in 2024—ranking first globally. Early figures for 2025 continue to show India at the top, highlighting persistent systemic concerns.

AIU Chair David Howman said the country's anti-doping programme has not kept pace with the scale of the problem.

Wembanyama dazzles on playoff debut as Spurs down Blazers in style

SAN ANTONIO



Victor Wembanyama delivered a sensational playoff debut, scoring 35 points to lead the San Antonio Spurs to a 111-98 win over the Portland Trail Blazers, while soaking in the support of fans and franchise greats.

The 22-year-old French star showed little sign of nerves despite the occasion, as San Antonio returned to the postseason after a six-year absence. Instead, Wembanyama described the atmosphere as reassuring rather than overwhelming, crediting the presence of Spurs legends and a packed arena for making him feel "safe" on the big stage.

Among those in attendance were Hall of Famers Tim Duncan, David Robinson, Manu Ginobili and George Gervin, along with longtime coach Gregg Popovich, adding to the occasion at the Frost Bank Center. Wembanyama's performance was historic. His 35 points marked the highest by a Spurs player on playoff debut, surpassing Duncan's 32 in 1998. He also set an NBA record for the most points in the first half of a playoff debut since detailed play-by-play tracking began in 1997, scoring 21 before the break.

Displaying his all-round brilliance, Wembanyama shot 13-of-21 from the field and an impressive 5-of-6 from beyond the arc. His ability to dominate both inside the paint and from long range left Portland struggling for answers, despite defensive adjustments.

Spurs coach Mitch Johnson praised the youngster's composure, noting that he grew into the game as it progressed and lifted the team's overall intensity, particularly on defence. Portland coach Tiago Splitter acknowledged the difficulty of containing Wembanyama, especially once he found his rhythm from distance.

The game also marked a symbolic return for San Antonio, a franchise that had enjoyed two decades of sustained success before missing the playoffs since 2019.

Hannah Green storms back to clinch third LA Championship title in playoff

LOS ANGELES

Hannah Green produced a remarkable comeback to win the JM Eagle LA Championship for the third time in four years, sealing victory with a clutch birdie in a dramatic playoff.

Trailing by as many as six shots on the back nine, Green surged with a composed final-round 68 to finish at 17-under 271, tying with Sei Young Kim and Jin Hee Im on a challenging, tree-lined course at El Caballero. In the playoff on the par-4 18th, Green struck a precise wedge from 130 yards and calmly sank a 12-foot birdie putt to secure the title. "I felt comfortable with the line, but it was still a tough putt," Green said after the win. Her composure under pressure proved decisive, especially after Kim's longer birdie attempt fell short and Im could not convert after reaching the green in three. The 29-year-old Australian had earlier looked out of contention, particularly after Kim chipped in for eagle on the 11th to extend her lead. However, Green responded immediately with a birdie and then caught fire, picking up shots from the 13th through the 16th holes. That run, combined with a late bogey from Kim, brought the trio level heading into the closing stages. Green admitted she had briefly written off her chances before her late surge. "I didn't think I was still in it. I just went for my shots," she said, reflecting on her aggressive mindset during the comeback.

Pranesh credits teamwork and support role in Vaishali's Candidates triumph

CHENNAI

Grandmaster M. Pranesh has highlighted the importance of preparation and emotional support in R. Vaishali's successful campaign at the FIDE Candidates Tournament, saying his role focused on openings and motivation during the high-pressure event.

The 19-year-old from Karaikudi was part of Vaishali's support team in Cyprus, where she emerged as the winner to earn the right to challenge reigning world champion Ju Wenjun for the title. Acting as a second and sparring partner, Pranesh said his responsibilities extended beyond game preparation.

"I was helping her with openings and providing motivation," he said, explaining that maintaining a positive mindset was critical in a tournament of such intensity. Vaishali, who had endured a difficult 2025 season, needed both technical guidance and emotional stability to rediscover her form. Vaishali acknowledged the impact of Pranesh's presence, noting that his ability to keep the atmosphere relaxed helped her stay composed. "It was very crucial. He made sure I was not getting tense," she said upon her return. Chess, often described as mentally demanding, places immense psychological pressure on players, particularly in elite events like the Candidates. Recognising this, coach R. B. Ramesh brought Pranesh into the team to provide balance and calmness. Pranesh said one of his key roles was to lift Vaishali's spirits after setbacks. "She tends to get upset after losses, so it was important to keep things light and help her stay motivated," he explained.

QUICK READ

India's retail deal volumes rise 21 pc in Q1; value at $1.5 bn

New Delhi

The domestic retail industry witnessed 146 deals worth $1.5 billion in the first quarter of 2026, including one public market transaction, indicating a recovery in volumes alongside a sharp moderation in values, a report said on Monday. In volume terms, deals rose 21 per cent to 146 from 120, while values declined about 55 per cent to $1.5 billion from $3.4 billion, reflecting a shift towards smaller transactions in the absence of large-ticket deals, according to an analysis by Grant Thornton Bharat. During the quarter, momentum was supported by increased outbound activity, even as investors remained focussed on disciplined deal-making, it said.

Central team to probe deadly accident at Vedanta power plant

New Delhi

A central team, comprising officials from the Department of Industrial Safety and Boiler Inspectors, is likely to begin a probe into the deadly accident at the Vedanta power plant in Dabhra tehsil of Sakti district, Chhattisgarh, that led to the death of several workers, while many others sustained serious injuries. According to reports, the team was expected to arrive in Sakti from Delhi on Saturday to carry out the inquiry. The move follows the submission of a report by the State Boiler Inspector, after which the central authorities decided to step in.

BHIM app users can now check credit scores in new version

New Delhi

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)-backed BHIM app will now allow users to view their credit scores alongside everyday transactions, following a tie-up between TransUnion CIBIL and NPCI BHIM Services Limited, it was announced on Monday. With this integration, users can directly check their CIBIL Score and Credit Information Report on the BHIM app, enabling them to track their credit health without leaving the platform. Moreover, access to credit data will be governed by a consent-based model, under which information is retrieved only after explicit user approval.

India–South Korea forge futuristic partnership with new MoUs

India, South Korea will continue to contribute towards peaceful and inclusive Indo-Pacific, says PM Modi

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday highlighted the growing partnership between India and South Korea, stating that both nations share a common vision for the Indo-Pacific region and are committed to promoting peace, stability, and inclusive development amid rising global tensions.

Addressing a joint press conference alongside South Korean President Lee Jae Myung, Prime Minister Modi underscored the importance of cooperation between the two countries in shaping a peaceful and progressive Indo-Pacific. He noted that both nations are aligned in their approach to global challenges and emphasized the need for reform in international institutions to effectively respond to evolving geopolitical dynamics.

Modi stated that in a time marked by uncertainty and conflict, India and South Korea jointly send a strong message of peace and stability to the world. He welcomed South Korea's participation in key global initiatives such as the International Solar Alliance and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, describing these steps as significant contributions toward regional cooperation and sustainability.

Welcoming President Lee on his first official visit to India, the Prime Minister praised his leadership and life journey, calling it an inspiring example of dedication to public service. He added that although it was President Lee's first visit, his connection with India had been evident since their earlier interactions.

The Prime Minister emphasized that the visit marks a turning point in bilateral relations, transforming a trusted partnership into a forward-looking and futuristic alliance. Over the past decade, ties between India and South Korea have expanded significantly, becoming more dynamic and comprehensive. Both countries, he noted, share democratic values, a commitment to market economies, and respect for the rule of law, which form the foundation of their strong relationship.

Highlighting future collaboration, Modi announced the establishment of an Industrial Cooperation Committee to enhance business ties. He also revealed plans to launch an Economic Security Dialogue aimed at strengthening cooperation in critical technologies and supply chains. The two nations are expected to explore opportunities across multiple sectors, including technology, manufacturing, energy, and environmental sustainability, ensuring mutual growth and long-term prosperity.

India-NZ set to sign landmark FTA in New Delhi

NEW DELHI

'In a time of global uncertainty, strengthening trade ties with India is crucial for New Zealand's long-term economic prosperity'

New Zealand and India are set to formalize a historic Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on April 27 in New Delhi, marking a significant milestone in bilateral economic relations and opening new avenues for trade and investment between the two nations.

Trade and Investment Minister Todd McClay announced on Monday that the legal verification of the agreement has been completed, paving the way for its official signing in the presence of business representatives from both countries.

He described the agreement as a once-in-a-generation opportunity that will provide New Zealand exporters with unprecedented access to India's vast market of 1.4 billion people, as well as an economy projected to become the world's third largest.

Highlighting the strategic importance of the agreement, McClay noted that in a time of global uncertainty, strengthening trade ties with India is crucial for New Zealand's long-term economic prosperity. The signing of the FTA will also initiate a formal parliamentary treaty examination process in New Zealand, allowing lawmakers and the public to review and scrutinize the agreement in detail.

The agreement, concluded in December, is expected to eliminate or reduce tariffs on 95 percent of New Zealand's exports to India—one of the most comprehensive outcomes in India's trade agreements. From the outset, nearly 57 percent of exports, including lamb, wool, coal, leather, forestry, and industrial products, will become duty-free. Over time, this figure is projected to rise to 82 percent, covering additional products such as infant formula, seafood, and expanded quotas for kiwifruit exports.

Certain sectors, including apples, mānuka honey, wine, and dairy products, will benefit from significant tariff reductions, even if not fully eliminated. McClay also pointed to the advantage of a Most Favoured Nation clause, which ensures that any improved access granted to other partners, such as the European Union, would automatically extend to New Zealand exporters if the agreement takes effect first.

Following the signing, the agreement will undergo review by New Zealand's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, with enabling legislation to be introduced after its examination. The process aligns with previous trade agreements, including the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, as both countries move closer to deepening economic cooperation and expanding bilateral trade opportunities.

PM Modi to launch major refinery project

JAIPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to visit Rajasthan on Tuesday, where he will dedicate a landmark refinery-cum-petrochemical complex to the nation, marking a major step forward in India's energy security and industrial development.

According to an official government statement, the Prime Minister will inaugurate India's first greenfield integrated Refinery-cum-Petrochemical Complex at Pachpadra in the Balotra region. The event is scheduled to begin at around 11:30 a.m., after which he will address a public gathering. The project is being widely regarded as a transformative initiative that will significantly boost India's refining capacity and petrochemical production while strengthening the country's position in the global energy landscape.

The refinery complex has been developed as a joint venture between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and the Government of Rajasthan. Built with an investment exceeding Rs 79,450 crore, it stands among the largest greenfield projects undertaken in India's energy sector. The scale of the project reflects the government's long-term commitment to infrastructure development and industrial growth.

With a refining capacity of 9 Million Metric Tonnes Per Annum (MMTPA), the complex is designed as a state-of-the-art facility that integrates both refining and petrochemical operations. It also includes a petrochemical capacity of 2.4 MMTPA, enabling the efficient conversion of crude oil into a wide range of value-added products. This integration is expected to improve cost efficiency and support the growth of downstream industries such as plastics, chemicals, and manufacturing.

A key highlight of the refinery is its high Nelson Complexity Index of 17.0, which signifies its advanced technological configuration and its ability to process diverse crude oil types. Additionally, its petrochemical yield exceeding 26 percent places it in line with global efficiency standards, ensuring both economic and environmental sustainability.

Beyond its technical capabilities, the project is expected to generate substantial employment opportunities and contribute to regional economic development. It will also enhance infrastructure in the surrounding areas and attract further investments. Overall, the initiative underscores India's focus on achieving energy self-reliance, strengthening industrial capacity, and driving long-term economic growth.

India seeks to cool war's oil burn with flex-fuel shift

NEW DELHI

The Government of India is preparing to accelerate the adoption of Flex Fuel Vehicles (FFVs) as part of its strategy to expand ethanol usage in the transport sector, amid growing uncertainty in global oil markets due to ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

According to official sources, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) is set to hold a crucial stakeholder meeting to outline a roadmap for the large-scale adoption of FFVs in the country. The meeting will be chaired by the Additional Secretary of the ministry and will bring together key industry players, including major Oil Marketing Companies such as Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, along with automobile manufacturers and other stakeholders.

The discussions are expected to focus on policy measures to expand ethanol blending beyond the current E20 mandate, under which petrol contains 20 percent ethanol. The government is now exploring the transition to Flex Fuel Vehicles capable of operating on ethanol blends of up to 85 percent, significantly increasing the share of biofuels in transportation.

This renewed push comes as India seeks to reduce its heavy dependence on crude oil imports, which currently account for over 85 percent of the country's total consumption. The volatility in global oil prices has underscored the need for greater energy security, prompting policymakers to diversify fuel sources and promote cleaner alternatives such as ethanol.

India has already made notable progress under the Ethanol Blended Petrol Programme, advancing its target of achieving 20 percent ethanol blending from 2030 to the Ethanol Supply Year 2025–26. To support this goal, the government has implemented several measures, including expanding feedstock sources and promoting maize cultivation around ethanol production facilities.

In addition, the government has approved the allocation of surplus rice from the Food Corporation of India for ethanol production, as well as the diversion of sugar to boost supply. These steps are aimed at ensuring adequate raw materials for ethanol production and supporting the scaling up of blending targets.

The push for FFVs is expected to play a key role in strengthening India's energy independence, reducing carbon emissions, and supporting the domestic agriculture and biofuel industries, while positioning the country for a more sustainable and resilient energy future.

Over 31K identified under SMILE Scheme as govt expands rehab efforts

NEW DELHI

The Government of India on Monday announced significant progress under its flagship welfare initiative SMILE scheme, revealing that over 31,000 individuals engaged in begging have been identified, with nearly 10,000 already rehabilitated through targeted interventions.

According to an official statement, a total of 31,055 individuals have been identified under the beggary subscheme, while 9,935 have successfully undergone rehabilitation. The initiative is part of a broader effort to address the issue of begging through structured support, skill development, and long-term livelihood opportunities, aligned with the government's vision of a begging-free India.

The scheme also focuses on the welfare of transgender individuals, with 21 Garima Greh homes currently operational across 17 states. Additionally, three more such facilities were sanctioned in August 2025. These shelter homes provide safe and dignified accommodation to transgender persons facing homelessness due to family rejection or social stigma.

Each Garima Greh offers comprehensive support, including food, healthcare services, recreational activities, and skill-building programmes. These homes are managed by Community-Based Organisations with financial assistance from the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. The initiative aims to create an enabling environment where individuals can rebuild their lives with dignity and independence.

Launched in 2022, the SMILE scheme represents India's first unified national framework designed to identify, rescue, and rehabilitate marginalized populations. It integrates services such as healthcare, education, counselling, and livelihood support into a single comprehensive system. For the period between 2021 and 2026, the government has allocated Rs. 390 crore to support the scheme's implementation.

A key component of the initiative is healthcare coverage under Ayushman Bharat TG Plus, which provides up to Rs. 5 lakh annually for transgender individuals. This includes coverage for gender-affirming procedures, hormone therapy, and other essential medical services at empanelled hospitals.

In addition, the scheme offers scholarships for transgender students from Class IX through postgraduate studies, promoting educational inclusion. On the entrepreneurship front, 18 development programmes have been launched nationwide to train around 1,800 transgender individuals in business planning, financial access, and market integration.

Officials stated that the SMILE scheme marks a transformative approach to social welfare by addressing multiple dimensions of marginalization, including identity, health, education, and employment, through a unified and inclusive framework.

AI firms invest 4 times more in core capabilities, leaders see 39% returns

NEW DELHI

Technology companies with successful artificial intelligence (AI) initiatives invest up to four times more in core capabilities such as data quality, governance, AI-ready talent and change management, even as only 39% of technology leaders are confident of seeing positive financial returns from their AI investments, a report said on Monday.

According to a report by Gartner, higher investments in foundational areas play a critical role in driving AI success across enterprises.

The report has outlined six key shifts needed to realise AI value, including building AI-first data and analytics capabilities, redesigning teams for human and AI collaboration, and strengthening context and data infrastructure to support AI systems.

It also highlighted the need for integrated engineering practices, trust-based governance models and a move beyond traditional return on investment (ROI) metrics towards long-term value creation.

Organisations with advanced AI-ready data and analytics capabilities are achieving up to 65 per cent higher business outcomes, including revenue growth and cost optimisation, Gartner said.

D&A leaders play a central role in achieving their organisation's AI value ambition, said Rita Sallam, Distinguished VP Analyst, Gartner Fellow and Chief of Research at Gartner.

Sallam noted that through 2030, the mandate for D&A leaders will be to build strong foundational capabilities, including trusted data and context-driven intelligence, requiring shifts in how teams operate, scale and create value.

However, challenges remain. Only 23 per cent of IT leaders are highly confident in their organisation's ability to manage security and governance while deploying generative AI tools.

Outgoing BOK chief stresses broader role of central bank

SEOUL

Outgoing Bank of Korea (BOK) Governor Rhee Chang-yong said on Monday that achieving economic stability and growth through monetary and fiscal policy alone has become increasingly difficult, calling for a broader role for the central bank in addressing long-term structural challenges.

Rhee made the remarks during his farewell ceremony in Seoul, as he completed his four-year term. His successor, Governor-designate Shin Hyun-song, is set to begin his term Tuesday as his nomination was approved by the parliament in the day.

Despite the weakening influence of monetary and fiscal policy on achieving stability and growth amid structural changes in the economy, public expectations for policymakers remain high based on past successes, widening the gap between the two, Rhee said.

Though recent economic and foreign exchange conditions have been relatively stable thanks to the semiconductor boom, it is difficult to view this entirely positively, as it also highlights deepening structural problems, such as excessive reliance on specific industries and resulting polarization, he added.

Stressing that structural reform is an ongoing process, Rhee urged the BOK to go beyond the boundaries of monetary and financial policy to become the nation's leading think tank by focusing on solutions to such structural issues as education, housing, balanced regional development, youth employment and elderly poverty.

Reflecting on his tenure, Rhee said the BOK played a key role in responding to unexpected shocks. He highlighted major achievements, including bringing inflation down to the 2 percent range ahead of other major central banks, introducing a Korea-style forward guidance, serving as chair of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) Committee on the Global Financial System (CGFS) and publishing more than 20 reports on structural reform.

Public trust in a central bank ultimately depends on its competence, he said. I hope you will not become complacent, but instead set higher goals and achieve even greater progress. Asked about his future plans, Rhee said he would continue working as an economic commentator and adviser after stepping down.

IPL 2026: SRH eye home dominance as DC seek consistency in crucial IPL clash

Both teams aim to stabilise campaigns amid inconsistent batting displays

HYDERABAD

Sunrisers Hyderabad will aim to extend their growing home momentum when they face an inconsistent Delhi Capitals in a mid-table clash of the Indian Premier League on Tuesday. With both sides locked on six points, Hyderabad hold a slight edge in the standings due to a superior net run rate, making this encounter crucial in shaping the playoff race.

SRH have shown encouraging signs despite the absence of regular skipper Pat Cummins, who has rejoined the squad but remains unavailable for the match. Under stand-in captain Ishan Kishan, their bowling unit has begun to click after a shaky start to the season.

Youngsters such as Praful Hinge, Sakib Husain and Shivang Kumar have injected energy and control, while Eshan Malinga's disciplined spells and effective death bowling proved decisive in recent wins over Rajasthan Royals and Chennai Super Kings.

However, Hyderabad's batting remains a concern. The aggressive top order, featuring Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma, has yet to fire collectively. Kishan himself is searching for consistency, often leaving the dependable Heinrich Klaasen to rebuild innings before accelerating late.

Delhi Capitals, led by Axar Patel, find themselves in a similar position, grappling with uneven performances. Experienced batters like KL Rahul, Pathum Nissanka and Tristan Stubbs have made starts but failed to convert them into match-winning contributions. Youngster Sameer Rizvi, after a bright beginning, has dipped in form with a string of low scores.

On the bowling front, South African pacer Lungi Ngidi has been a standout performer, while Axar has maintained control in the middle overs.

However, the team will expect more from Kuldeep Yadav, with support from Mukesh Kumar and T Natarajan remaining inconsistent.

With both teams seeking stability and momentum, Tuesday's contest promises to be a tightly fought battle as they aim to climb the mid-table standings.

The match is scheduled to begin at 7.30 pm.

RASHID KHAN

declined India citizenship offer, chose loyalty to Afghanistan

NEW DELHI

Afghanistan's star leg-spinner Rashid Khan turned down informal offers of citizenship from both India and Australia, choosing to remain committed to representing his homeland, according to a new book chronicling his journey.

In Rashid Khan: From Streets to Stardom, authored by Mohammad Haand Jafar and released on Monday, the all-rounder reveals that he was approached with opportunities to switch allegiance but firmly declined. "If I don't play for my country, I won't play for any other country either," Rashid is quoted as saying, underlining his unwavering loyalty to Afghanistan.

The 27-year-old recounts a specific instance during the 2023 season of the Indian Premier League, where he was informed by a team official that a senior representative from the Board of Control for Cricket in India wished to meet him. During the interaction, he was reportedly offered the chance to settle in India, obtain documents, and continue his cricketing career there.

Rashid said he was taken aback by the proposal but responded politely, reiterating his commitment to Afghanistan. His stance reflects a consistent theme in his career, where national pride has taken precedence over lucrative opportunities abroad.

The book also revisits a similar episode in 2018 when Rashid, then playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad, delivered a match-winning all-round performance against Kolkata Knight Riders. His exploits sparked a wave of support from Indian fans on social media, with many urging the government to grant him citizenship.

The matter even drew a response from former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, who clarified that citizenship decisions fall under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Then Afghan President Ashraf Ghani also weighed in, calling Rashid a matter of national pride.

From humble beginnings in Nangarhar to global stardom, Rashid's story highlights resilience, discipline and a deep sense of identity.

RINKU'S

unbeaten fifty lifts KKR, boosts confidence after tense chase

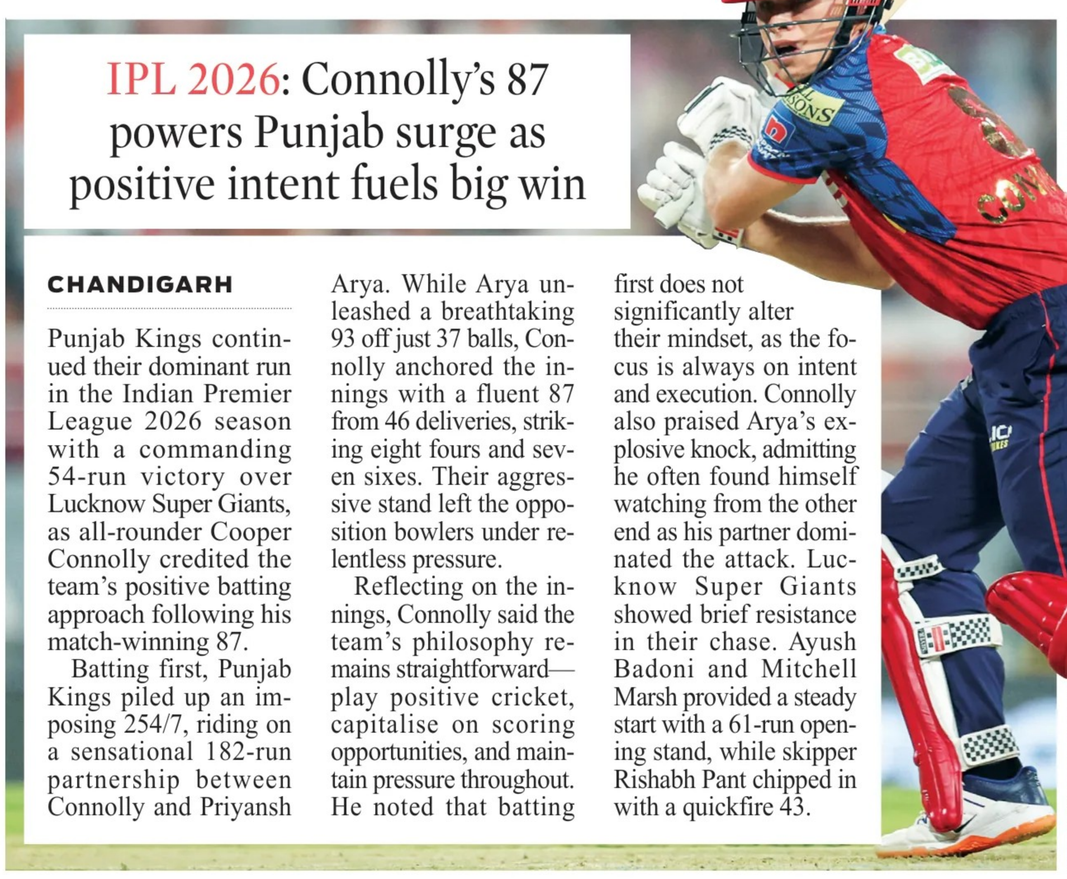
KOLKATA

Rinku Singh delivered a match-winning performance under pressure, scoring an unbeaten 53 to guide Kolkata Knight Riders to their first win of the Indian Premier League 2026 season against Rajasthan Royals, calling the knock crucial for his confidence.

Walking in with the chase finely poised, the KKR vice-captain combined composure with controlled aggression, ensuring his team crossed the line in a tense encounter at Eden Gardens. Reflecting on his innings, Rinku said the intensity of the situation never translated into hesitation. His focus, he explained, was always on taking the game deep and finishing it.

The left-hander, who had endured a quiet run earlier in the season, admitted the innings was long overdue. "I was waiting for a big one.

Mumbai Indians beat Gujarat Titans by 99 runs in IPL 2026 match at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedadad on Monday.



IPL 2026: Connolly's 87 powers Punjab surge as positive intent fuels big win

CHANDIGARH

Punjab Kings continued their dominant run in the Indian Premier League 2026 season with a commanding 54-run victory over Lucknow Super Giants, as all-rounder Cooper Connolly credited the team's positive batting approach following his match-winning 87.

Batting first, Punjab Kings piled up an imposing 254/7, riding on a sensational 182-run partnership between Connolly and Priyansh Arya. While Arya unleashed a breathtaking 93 off just 37 balls, Connolly anchored the innings with a fluent 87 from 46 deliveries, striking eight fours and seven sixes. Their aggressive stand left the opposition bowlers under relentless pressure.

Reflecting on the innings, Connolly said the team's philosophy remains straightforward—play positive cricket, capitalise on scoring opportunities, and maintain pressure throughout. He noted that batting first does not significantly alter their mindset, as the focus is always on intent and execution. Connolly also praised Arya's explosive knock, admitting he often found himself watching from the other end as his partner dominated the attack. Lucknow Super Giants showed brief resistance in their chase. Ayush Badoni and Mitchell Marsh provided a steady start with a 61-run opening stand, while skipper Rishabh Pant chipped in with a quickfire 43.

SHREYAS IYER

in frame for T20 captaincy as selectors reassess leadership options

NEW DELHI

Shreyas Iyer has emerged as a potential candidate for India's T20 captaincy, with the Board of Control for Cricket in India exploring leadership options amid concerns over the prolonged dip in form of current skipper Suryakumar Yadav.

With the latest T20 World Cup concluded, the focus within Indian cricket has already shifted towards upcoming global events, including the 2028 Summer Olympics and the next ICC T20 World Cup in 2028. This long-term horizon has given selectors the flexibility to reassess leadership strategies and build a stable core for the future.

According to media reports citing board sources, Iyer's name has come under serious consideration despite his absence from the T20I setup since 2023. While bringing him back directly into the side and handing him captaincy would be a bold move, his proven leadership credentials in domestic and franchise cricket strengthen his case. Iyer first demonstrated his captaincy acumen with Delhi Capitals (formerly Delhi Daredevils), taking over the reins in 2020 after Gautam Gambhir stepped down. He later led Kolkata Knight Riders to their third Indian Premier League title in 2024, ending a decade-long wait and reinforcing his reputation as a composed and tactically sound leader.

Currently captaining Punjab Kings under head coach Ricky Ponting, Iyer has continued to showcase his leadership skills, combining calm decision-making with an aggressive approach suited to the shortest format. The selectors' deliberations also come against the backdrop of India's broader planning cycle, with the 2027 ODI World Cup identified as a key milestone.

This has allowed room to experiment and potentially transition leadership in the T20 format without immediate pressure.

From UAE nets to IPL spotlight:

YASH RAJ PUNJA'S rising journey

BENGALURU

The journey of Yash Raj Punja from recreational cricket in the UAE to the grand stage of the Indian Premier League is a story of persistence, timely mentorship and seizing opportunities.

It began in 2023 when former Karnataka cricketer and coach K Jeshwant spotted the tall leg-spinner during a coaching camp in Abu Dhabi. At the time, Punja was playing casual cricket, with no clear professional pathway. Convincing his family was not easy either, especially after his brother Yodhin Punja's promising career with UAE's Under-19 team was cut short by injury.

However, Jeshwant's belief in the youngster proved decisive. Encouragement from former England captain Alastair Cook, who reportedly noticed an "X-factor" in Punja, further tilted the balance. Soon, the 19-year-old began travelling to Bengaluru to train at the Six Cricket Academy, laying the foundation for his growth. His breakthrough came at the IPL mini-auction last December, where Rajasthan Royals secured his services for Rs 30 lakh. Just months later, Punja found himself thrust into action as an Impact Substitute against Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens.

Chakravarthy blames pitches for dip, dismisses criticism after strong comeback

KOLKATA

Varun Chakravarthy has attributed his recent dip in form to unhelpful pitches rather than flaws in his bowling, brushing aside criticism after a match-winning performance in the Indian Premier League. The mystery spinner returned to form with impressive figures of 3/14 on a sluggish Eden Gardens surface, playing a key role in Kolkata Knight Riders ending their six-match winless run with a four-wicket victory over Rajasthan Royals.

Despite his recent struggles, which date back to the Super Eights stage of the T20 World Cup earlier this year, Chakravarthy remained defiant. He insisted that his performances were largely influenced by pitch conditions rather than any technical shortcomings.

"I wasn't making any mistakes—it was because of the pitches," he said, underlining that surfaces offering little assistance can make even top bowlers appear ineffective.

Chakravarthy's lean patch saw him concede heavily, including an expensive outing against Mumbai Indians earlier this season, and a delayed first wicket after several matches. However, he emphasised that such phases are part of the game, particularly for spinners who rely heavily on surface conditions.

He also rejected suggestions that he had been experimenting excessively with pace and length under pressure.

According to him, his core approach has remained unchanged, with only minor adjustments in line and angle to challenge batters more effectively.

Billion-Dollar Attack Gives France World Cup Edge

PARIS

France heads into the World Cup with one of the most formidable attacking lineups in football, boasting a combined value of over $1 billion. Led by Kylian Mbappé, the squad offers remarkable depth, leaving coach Didier Deschamps with the tough task of selecting his starting XI.

Mbappé, nearing Olivier Giroud's national scoring record, headlines a star-studded attack that includes Ousmane Dembélé, Michael Olise, and emerging talents like Désiré Doué and Rayan Cherki.

With flair, speed, and creativity across the front line, France appears well-equipped for a deep tournament run. Their opening match against Senegal on June 16 will offer the first glimpse of this high-value, high-impact attack in action.

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